Lilith

THE INDEPENDENT JEWISH WOMEN'S MAGAZINE

"It's Not Sex"
What Teen Girls Say They're Doing

How Recipes Reconcile Us

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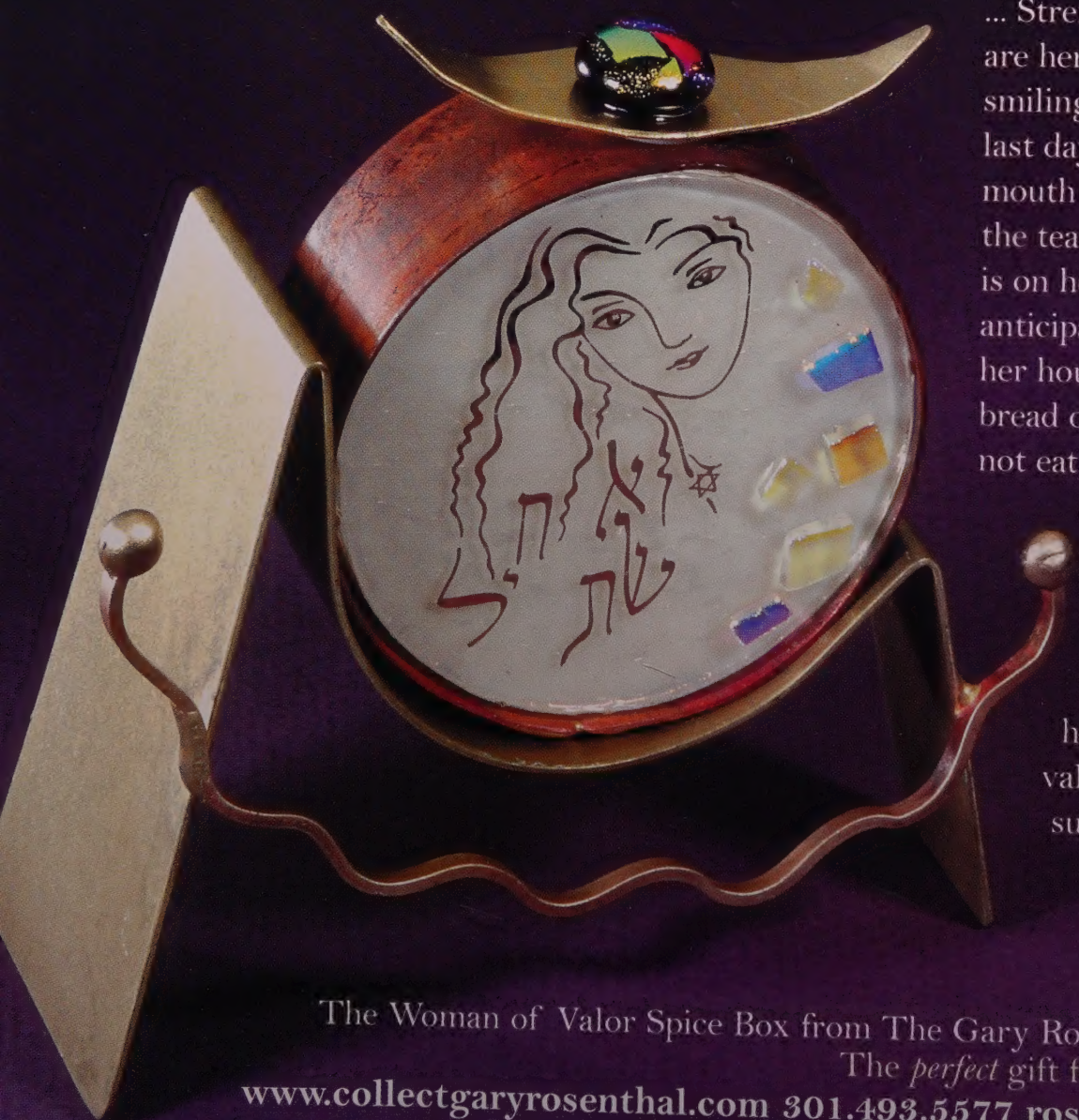
Jewish Women: Why the Rush to Remarry?

We Found Her!
A Canadian Muslim Lesbian Feminist Activist!

A Woman of Valor, who can find?

Far beyond pearls is her value. Her husband's heart trusts in her and he shall lack no fortune... She is like a merchant's ship; from afar she brings her sustenance. She rises while it is still nighttime, and gives food to her household and a ration to her maids. She considers a field and buys it; from the fruit of her handiwork she plants a vineyard... She spreads out her palm to the poor and extends her hands to the destitute.



... Strength and splendor are her clothing, and smilingly she awaits her last day. She opens her mouth with Wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue. She anticipates the needs of her household, and the bread of idleness, she does not eat. Her children rise and celebrate her; and her husband, he praises her:

"Many daughters have attained valor, but you have surpassed them all."

Proverbs 31:10-31

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Lilith

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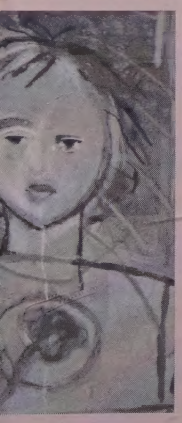

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Cover: Untitled oil pastel by Marcia Falk.
©1997 Marcia Lee Falk. www.marciafalk.com.
See more of her work on page 29.

Why is this magazine called LILITH?
In the Garden of Eden, long before the eating of the apple, the Holy One created the first human beings—a man, Adam, and a woman, Lilith. Lilith said "We are equal because we are created from the same earth."
—FROM THE ALPHABET OF BEN SIRA, 23A-B

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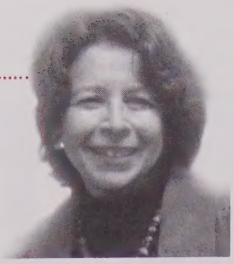
From the Editor



Sex and food in the same issue—what a pleasure, right? Well, not exactly.

The sex report (not good news) is about a form of precocious sexual activity we've been hearing about at LILITH with increasing frequency, and it seems to have much more to do with power, peer pressure and popularity than with pleasure. I have more to say on the subject, from both feminist and Jewish perspectives, in my introduction to the report which begins on page 14.

But the food article is another story. It's not a joke, nor retro-chic, that this feminist magazine is publishing a recipe. We store some of our most vivid recollections through sense impressions—sight, sound, smell, taste, touch—so it's no surprise that food is an index to our memories. Recipes can reconcile us to people and places we may have thought we'd left forever. In a memoir in this issue we're voyeurs in the Brooklyn kitchen of a woman whose professional life revolves around food, and whose personal practices differ dramatically from those of the Syrian Orthodox cousins her family split off from a generation ago. We witness how, through recipes, she reclaims both the dishes and the lineage of her childhood.

Food. Sex. Babies. Poetry. And not exactly in that order.

A resurgence of interest in family recipes (maybe like the boom in mah jong and knitting among twenty- and and thirtysomethings) is one part of the search for a connections with female relatives. In another era (a mere 30 years ago?), a Jewish woman typically had her first child when she was in her twenties, and a generational reconciliation often took place around childrearing. Even adult daughters whose lives had not mimicked their mothers' in other ways were able to connect with the older generation as they replicated the pattern of procreation. Mother-daughter splits were often patched (if not totally repaired) when the daughters became mothers themselves. Today, with many women not having children until they are well into their thirties, or not having children at all, the chances of bonding over a child/grandchild fade. Now food becomes the great conciliatory leveler. We hear this from younger women and from their mothers with every holiday. If the mix of memory and desire that triggers recipe transmission doesn't bring women closer to their families of origin, well, at least there'll be a good meal out of the attempt.

Babies have also been in the consciousness of the Women's Caucus of the Association of Jewish Studies this season. To explain: the Association is the academic umbrella for scholars in a diverse range of fields connected to the study of Jews and Judaism—sociology, Bible, demography, Middle East affairs, women's studies, literature, and more. At LILITH, we've often used the Women's Caucus of the AJS as a measure of how far women academics have come since their first breakfast meeting at the annual December meeting of the Association drew together maybe a dozen women more than 15 years ago. Now, hundreds of women gather to network and celebrate the explosion of interest in Jewish women's scholarship.

And yet…

Despite the recognition women receive for their outstanding work in every aspect of Jewish studies, despite the fact that their books win awards and their research wins kudos, one of the prime topics for discussion on the women's caucus listserve this fall was the push for childcare at the Association of Jewish Studies annual meeting. Not that anyone was saying this is exclusively a women's issue (at least for now, making babies requires sperm as well as egg). But, clearly, the Association had been happy to ignore the subject for all the years it had been meeting without a strong female presence.

In response to the pleas for childcare to be offered routinely at the annual meeting, I wrote:

> *For years—in fact, since LILITH's launch in 1976 —every time I'd be asked to give a daytime lecture to a Jewish group I routinely insisted that there be childcare available to attendees. I was (and still am) often told that "No one will use it."*
>
> *My reply? Even if no one does the first time, more will come when offering childcare is routine. But more important, in some ways, is that Organization X send the message (not so hard to decode) that the community as a whole—not just the desperate female parent—takes responsibility for raising Jewish children.*
>
> *It might not be a bad idea for all of us to adopt this practice when we're invited to speak. It would help to move along the cause of universally available childcare if some of the pressure comes from the podium, and not just from the parent.*

Right after I posted this I was disheartened to see a new study on how having children cripples the careers of academic women. The study, "Do Babies Matter," provides what is believed to be the first national data on how professors with children fare in academe. Turns out that women's chances for tenure are greatly reduced if they have children. And while having children, particularly early on, can severely damage the job prospects of women, fatherhood is actually a boon to academic men, since if they have children they are far more likely than women to have a stay-at-home spouse to help meet all needs. Can you believe you are reading these findings in the 21st century?

Maybe this is LILITH's retro issue, reminding us of all the tasks we thought we'd completed, and which have to be revisited this season. Fasten your seat belts. Here is the short list

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of the struggles touched on just within these pages: to protect our right to choose when and if we will have children; to educate girls and young women about a healthy sexuality; to look again at the consequences of Jewish divorce law on women who have come through the *get* process. Welcome to the past.

There are, however, some notes for a rosier future. One of these is the launch of a new poetry project at LILITH, made possible by Charlotte Newberger of Chicago. Poetry can explain the world in ways that no other literary form can, providing a unique opportunity for refracting Jewish women's issues. For 27 years, LILITH has been one of the few publications—general, women's or Jewish—to feature poetry. As more magazines of note (women's magazines, Jewish periodicals, and literary journals) have shut down in the past five years, LILITH has become an increasingly valuable venue for poetry written by women on Jewish themes. Now, with the generous support of Newberger, a businesswoman and arts activist with a special interest in poetry, LILITH will be able to publish poetry in each issue of the magazine.

We are also delighted to announce the new **Charlotte Newberger Poetry Prize** at LILITH. Poets are invited to submit their work by May 1, 2004, to be considered for this first annual award. Please submit no more than three poems, in hard copy only. The distinguished judges will be announced in our spring issue. First, second and third prize winners will receive a cash award, publication in LILITH, and the opportunity for a public reading. Poets and LILITH readers alike can all be grateful for the generosity that is bringing this poetry project to life.

Susan Weidman Schneider
Editor-in-Chief

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Kol Ishah:
The Voices of Women.

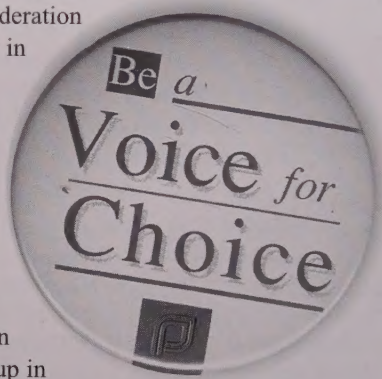
Traditionally, the **voice** of the Jewish woman was **not to be heard** in public, lest it arouse men. **No more.** These pages are for news about Jewish women, **in our own strong voices.**

Reproductive Rights: An Update

In this Administration's continuing assault on women's rights, **President Bush** in November signed the so-called "partial birth abortion" bill, which was twice vetoed by **President Clinton**. The law, the first to criminalize an abortion procedure, bans a form of late-term abortion without any exceptions, even if the mother's health is in danger. Its language, critics say, is deliberately vague and could be interpreted to apply to *any* form of abortion. Jewish women's organizations, which had lobbied against the bill when it was in Congress, are now helping in the push to overturn it.

Ellen Witman, co-director for Washington operations of the National Council of Jewish Women, said that NCJW was waiting to see what *amicus curiae* briefs would soon be circulating. "We may join them," she said. Ditto for the American Jewish Congress, and Hadassah. "We will sign *amicus* briefs, and may also consider taking the lead in filing briefs," said **Shelley Klein,** Hadassah's advocacy director. Klein also said that Hadassah is reconsidering their longstanding position of not lobbying on the appointment of judges. The reason, she said, is that the fight to preserve reproductive rights is increasingly being waged in the courts. NCJW, on the other hand, has been involved in judicial lobbying since 2002, when the organization began its "Benchmark" campaign to advocate for a federal judiciary that will preserve reproductive choice.

On the very day that the "partial birth" bill became law, Planned Parenthood and the National Abortion Federation were immediately challenging its constitutionality in the courts. Within a few days, federal judges in three states—New York, California and Nebraska—ruled to halt implementation of the ban. But during the gap between the signing of the law and the judges' rulings, many Planned Parenthood clinics stopped performing second-trimester abortions on patients. The reason? According to Nassau County Planned Parenthood president and CEO **Karen Pearl**, the organization was afraid that its physicians and staff might end up in jail, after being charged with performing an illegal procedure.



During those 48 or so hours when Planned Parenthood could not perform abortions, many poor women were deprived of the right to self-determination. But the ramifications of the law go even further than this awful scenario. So basic are women's reproductive rights in Jewish law that **Rabbi Renni Altman**, associate rabbi of Temple Beth El of Great Neck, New York, made the fight to save Roe the subject of her Yom Kippur morning sermon this year. "Rabbis throughout history have viewed abortion as morally required in instances where the health of the mother is in jeopardy," wrote **Rabbi David Ellenson**, president of Hebrew Union College, in a recent editorial in the Forward newspaper. "The persons who fashioned the current law fail to affirm this position, and I fail to see why they should enjoy a moral monopoly on this issue."

—ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

Stifling Scientists

One hundred and fifty scientists at the National Institutes of Health who are researching HIV/AIDS, risk-taking behaviors and sexuality have been targeted by a conservative group. The Traditional Values Coalition, which claims to be the largest church lobby in America, compiled a "hit list" of what they called "provocative" research subjects. According to Representative **Henry Waxman** (D) of California, the list ended up in the hands of Republican lawmakers, who then showed it to the NIH. The NIH has now asked the scientists to further justify their work. Waxman, in a letter to Secretary of Health and Human Services **Tommy Thompson**, urged him to denounce "this scientific McCarthyism."

Slaves of the Lord

In a scene from the new film "Slaves of the Lord" by **Hadar Friedlich**, it is the night before Passover. A slight 13-year-old girl stands frozen in her living room. As her parents lie sleeping in their bed, she is shouting, over and over again—silently—in her head:

"I say shut up as I always have and it's like a vow, SHUT UP. I say shut up as I always have and it's like a vow, SHUT UP. I say shut up..."

She darts back and forth to the piano to check inside for leaven, writhing with worry over any stray crumbs. During the preparations for Passover, the epitome of rigorous cleaning, Tamar's feelings of impurity intensify, bringing the film to its dramatic climax.

"Slaves of the Lord" is the poignant story of Tamar, a Jewish teen growing up in a stern Orthodox family in Israel. This film raises a serious, unaddressed issue for the Jewish community and beyond.

"By telling this story, I'm trying to show the dangers that loom when religious education is delivered by ways of intimidation, by instilling fear, by building on guilt feelings and emphasizing extreme self-criticism," says Friedlich. "I'm trying to show what happens when we move away from the essence of faith and adhere only to the ceremonies and rituals, thus turning ourselves into slaves, following the rules without thinking about their meaning."

Maya Eshet (l.) as Tamar; Razya Israeli as her mother.

Tamar is interrogated at the dinner table by her father about what she has learned in Torah study class and harangued by her mother about playing the piano at her bat mitzvah. When her first menstruation comes, instead of seeking any comfort from her mother, she reads from the Jewish book of ethical codes—and determines that she is impure. She repeatedly, obsessively carries out ritual hand washing before eating to restore her purity. As she isolates herself from those around her, she secretly throws away her bat mitzvah invitations instead of handing them out to friends.

Although the film has an obvious Jewish context, Friedlich emphasizes that the story applies to all religions. She says she does not regard her film as a condemnation of Orthodox Judaism.

At a viewing at the 2003 Israel Film Festival in New York, audience members spoke out about the role strict religion played in their own childhoods. Freidlich told LILITH she is using the film as a springboard of education and advocacy, to incite people to pay attention to this issue. "I wasn't concerned about the reaction to the 'message' of the film because I tried to make people think about this issue, and I did not care if they agreed or not, were mad or not, as long as it made them think."

—ILANA KRAMER

For information on Israeli films see www.israelfilmfestival.com

Hail to the Poet Laureate

Louise Glück, a native of Woodmere, Long Island, was named poet laureate in August 2003. Gluck, who won the 1993 Pulitzer Prize, has published nine books of poetry. "I became a criminal when I fell in love," she writes in her 1986 poem, *Siren*. "Before that I was a waitress. I didn't want to go to Chicago with you. I wanted to marry you, I wanted/Your wife to suffer." Where does she get her inspiration? "You just live your life," Gluck told the *Washington Post* last October, "and you hope that some poem demands to be written."

Woody Guthrie's Jewish Songs

In celebration of Hanukkah 2003, New York's 92nd Street Y presented a show called Holy Ground: the Jewish Songs of **Woody Guthrie**, performed by the **Klezmatics**. During the 1940s, Guthrie wrote dozens of Jewish-themed songs in collaboration with his Jewish activist mother-in-law, **Aliza Greenblatt**. Greenblatt is the mother of dancer **Marjorie Mazia**, and grandmother of **Arlo** and **Nora.** Nora, who is director of the Woody Guthrie Archives, only recently discovered her famous grandfather's connection to Judaism. As for Aliza, Nora says, "I never knew she wrote songs—I always thought she was just my Bubbie!"

Gathering Strength in Berlin

She held the Shabbat prayer book in her hand, but **Inna Astvatsatryan** could barely read it through her tears. This was Astvatsatryan's first visit to Berlin from Armenia, her first Bet Debora conference.

"Like most Soviet people, I didn't believe in God," Astvatsatryan, who chairs the women's club of the Jewish Community of Armenia, later said. "But at that moment, I really believed that God saved me and saved my family."

The power of the moment for Astvatsatryan underscores the isolation of many Jewish women in far-flung outposts. For many, this conference, held in May at the Museum of Prenzlauer Berg in former East Berlin, provided a rare chance to meet their counterparts from other countries.

In all, some 150 women came from across Europe, Israel, the USA and the former Soviet Union for three days of workshops and lectures, under the theme of "Power and Responsibility." Speakers included communal and religious leaders, political activists, artists and writers.

The program focused on effective leadership, biblical role models, how to balance personal with communal needs, how to succeed in male-dominated domains, and how to avoid seeking power for its own sake. [LILITH's editors ask: Would any *men's* conference have worried about this?] Leaders encouraged women to run in local elections; at present there are very few women in positions of authority in German Jewish communal organizations.

(l-r) Elisa Klapheck, Edna Sovin and Lara Daemmig in Berlin at the dedication of a plaque to Slonim's grandparents, pre-war Jewish community activists Bertha and Hermann Falkenberg.

In keeping with the theme, the event was launched with the dedication of a plaque at the former home of two pre-war Berlin Jewish activists: **Bertha Falkenberg**, who in 1924 fought for the rights of women to vote as full members of her synagogue, and her husband, **Hermann Falkenberg**, founder of a liberal synagogue in Berlin. Their granddaughter, **Edna Sovin**, came from London for the ceremony.

Bet Debora participants from FSU (l-r): Yusifova Solmaz, Azerbaijan; Marine Solomonishvilli, Georgia; Inna Astvatsatvyan, Armenia; Sofa Grinberg, Azerbaijan.

Among the more controversial subjects at the event was the question of whether Europe's Jewish community should be more active in helping refugees, and a closing discussion with Christian and Muslim women.

The gathering "was a breakthrough on a political level," said conference co-founder **Elisa Klapheck**, noting that **Charlotte Knobloch**, a vice president of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, and **Cynthia Kain**, a vice president of the Berlin Jewish community, both spoke at the conference.

"But it was also a breakthrough on a spiritual level."

Bet Debora is the brainchild of Klapheck and **Lara Daemmig**, two Berliners, who already have a reputation as rabble-rousers for the cause of Jewish women. In the early 1990s Klapheck, who grew up in West Berlin, helped spark an egalitarian minyan that today is under the official umbrella of the Berlin Jewish community. She also has published the annotated dissertation of the world's first ordained female rabbi, Regina Jonas of Berlin, who died in Auschwitz in 1942. Recently, Klapheck and Daemmig—a former East Berliner—collaborated on a new edition of the prayers of **Bertha Pappenheim**, a pioneer in the pre-war Berlin Jewish community, better known as Sigmund Freud's famous patient "Anna O."

The two have collaborated since 1999 on Bet Debora. To shake things up a bit, the next conference is planned for Budapest.

European Jewry still has a long way to go when it comes to so-called women's issues. In Germany, there are very few women on the boards of Jewish communities. Of some 24 rabbis, two are women. There are fewer than a handful of congregations where women as well as men can read from the Torah.

In Berlin, where only one of six synagogues has mixed seating and offers aliyas to women, the first Bet Debora conference in 1999—which focused on female rabbis, cantors and educators—was part of a trend toward greater acceptance of diversity. The road has not been easy. Not all members of the established Jewish community in Germany feel comfortable hosting Jewish feminists on their turf. But, as several speakers said at the opening event, Bet Debora appears to be "here to stay."

"It has become a tradition," Charlotte Knobloch said.

But complacency is dangerous, added **Alice Shalvi**, founder of the Israel Women's Network who addressed the conferees. "Four years ago, you were the outsiders. Beware of becoming establishment." If you become an insider, Shalvi said, you give up to some extent the mandate to challenge the status quo.

—TOBY AXELROD

To learn more: www.bet-debora.de

Trembling Before G-D, the Sequel

Two years ago, **Sandi DuBowski's** groundbreaking documentary *Trembling Before G-d,* a searing look at what it means to be homosexual in the Orthodox and Hasidic worlds, hit the theatres. Since then, DuBowski has traveled around the country, showing his film to audiences in theatres and synagogues, some of them Orthodox. For the first time, homosexuality, formerly a forbidden subject in the Orthodox world, was being openly discussed. In October, *Trembling* was released on DVD, which DuBowski calls an "almost sequel" to the original. It contains additional footage on, in DuBowski's words, "all the reactions and life changes" that have resulted. For example, Leah, an Orthodox Jew, says how proud she is now to be out of the closet, and while Leah's partner, Malka, uses a pseudonym and won't show her face on camera, she nonetheless says that *Trembling* has enabled her for the first time to communicate with her relatives. We also see the transformation of the once-obese Michelle, a Hasidic lesbian who, after leaving her husband and community, has now shed over 100 pounds and stands triumphantly before an audience.

"The women literally step out of the shadows," said DuBowski. "It's the phenomenon of the women of *Trembling.* They move from the closet to visibility, from fear to empowerment."

—A.S.A.

For information about the DVD *Trembling Before G-d*: www.tremblingbeforeg-d.com.

So That's Where She Got Those Eyebrows!

New York's Jewish Museum is currently showing "**Frida Kahlo's** Intimate Family Picture," an exhibit of paintings and photos which focuses on the fact that the artist had a Jewish father. The images in the 1936 painting "My Grandparents, My Parents, and I," representing her Mexican and Hungarian-Jewish forebears, indicate that Kahlo felt some connection to her Jewish roots. The exhibit runs until January 4, 2004.

Frida Kahlo, *My Grandparents, My Parents, and I,* 1936, Oil and tempera on metal panel, 12-1/8 x 13-5/8 in. (30.7 x 34.5 cm). The Museum of Modern Art, New York: Gift of Allan Roos, M.D. and B. Mathiau Roos, 1976. Image © 2003 The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

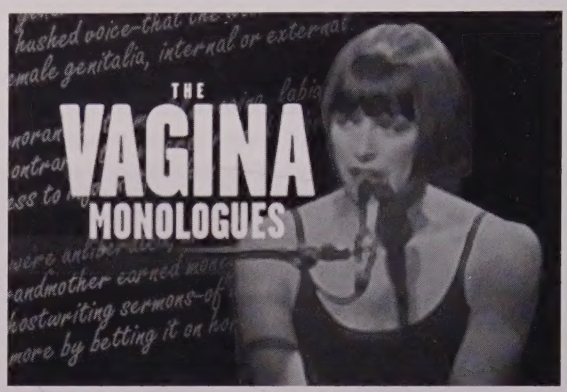
kol ishah

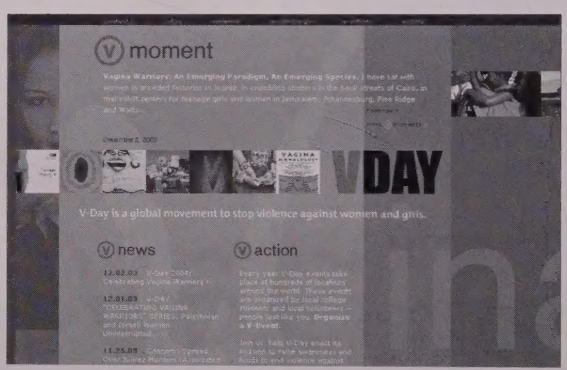
Women's Voices Tuned Out on PBS

Just before the onset of the High Holidays in September, Channel Thirteen, New York's local PBS station, ran a special program featuring cantorial music that had been recorded in the Portuguese synagogue in Amsterdam. Cantors: A Faith in Song featured three chazanim, **Naftali Herstik**, **Ben Zion Miller**, and **Alberto Mizrahi**—all men. One might argue that women cantors were not included because the concert was recorded in an Orthodox synagogue. Still, the program included discussions with the performers and relevant luminaries during several intermissions, where somebody should have explained why no women's voices were heard. It was an egregious omission, at a time when the cantorate is increasingly becoming a women's profession.

A Vagina-Friendly UJA-Federation

February, 2003: Imagine 30 of the most prominent women in the New York Jewish community—including author **Letty Cottin Pogrebin**, philanthropist **Barbara Dobkin**, Jewish Home and Hospital CEO **Audrey Weiner**, past Hadassah president **Marlene Post**, AOL marketing director **Jackie Stone**, UJA-Federation campaign chair **Susie Stern**, Broadway producer **Daryl Roth**, Lebenthal and Company president **Alexandra Lebenthal**—sitting on two rows of stools on a stage in front of 1300 people. "My vagina is a shell, a round pink tender shell opening and closing," shouts one. Says **Lisa Perr**: "My short skirt and everything under it is Mine, Mine, Mine." Vagina, says another, sounds like an infection, maybe a medical instrument ("Hurry, nurse, bring me the vagina."). "In Great Neck," another woman yells, "they call it a pussycat, in Westchester a pokie, in New Jersey a twat, and a split knish in Philadelphia." Susie Stern, with great abandon, demonstrated a variety of fake orgasms. The audience cheered, clapped, applauded, cried, yelled, and stamped their feet.





The women, members of the UJA-Federation Task Force on the Jewish Woman, were performing **Eve Ensler's** now-famous *Vagina Monologues* [LILITH published an excerpt in Fall 1998] in celebration of V-Day, a worldwide campaign to end violence against women. Ensler invites communities around the world to stage her Obie-award winning play every February. The proceeds go to organizations that are working to stop sexual violence.

In an especially compelling personal recitation, **Shira Epstein**, daughter of a prominent rabbi, told the audience how she was taught in her Orthodox high school to find "a nice Jewish boy." But when she met someone who seemed to fill the bill in her first year at Brown, he forced her to perform sexual acts that she found repugnant. He was, she realized, anything but nice.

The UJA-Federation presentation was the largest ever, and raised the most money—$250,000. Ensler joined the cast onstage for the final monologue, and declared UJA "a vagina-friendly organization." The show blew the minds of the executives at UJA-Federation, some of whom had been hostile when I, as chair of the Task Force, and others first presented the idea to them. "Who would have ever thought that we could live to see the day when the words 'vagina' and 'UJA-Federation' would appear in the same sentence?" a rabbi asked. In a congratulatory letter, one of the original male naysayers now said that he couldn't wait to see what we women would do next.

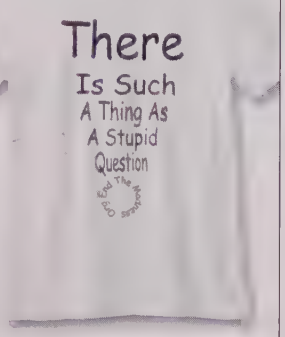
V-Day is February 14, just around the corner. Stay tuned.

—ESTHER ANN ASCH

For information about V-Day: www.vday.org

A Matchmaking Crisis in the Jewish Community

In response to what he calls a "shidduch crisis" in the religious Jewish community, **Chananya Weissman**, a 25-year-old rabbinical student at Yeshiva University in New York has started "End the Madness," an organization which hosts live symposiums and chat rooms on its website. The madness, says Weissman, refers to the crazy questions ("Does he wear shoes with laces?" "What's her dress size?" "Where do the parents *daven?*") that people now ask each other, and feel compelled to answer, during courtship.



Does he wear shoes with laces? • What's her dress size? • What's her mother's dress size? • Does he rinse his hands from the faucet or with a cup? • Where did she go to camp? • Where did he go to elementary school? • To which school will he send his (unborn) children? • What is the shape of her face? • Does he have a good voice? • Who is his Posek? • What do her parents do for a living? • What kind of tablecloth do her parents use on Shabbos? • Does he wear a hat when he davens? • Does he wear a hat when he takes out the garbage? • Does her aunt cover her hair? • Where do her parents daven? • How frum are they? • Are they Yeshivish? • Lakewood Yeshivish? • Modern? • Chasidish Haimish? • Chasidish With it? • Charedi? • Can you fax me his father's tax return? • What are her interests? • Is he nice? • How tall is he? • Does she wear denim skirts? • Does she say Tachanun on Yom Ha'atzmaut? • How many hours a day does she learn? • Whose shiur is he in? • What's his hashkafa? • Are both of her parents Jewish? • What type of yarmulke does he wear? • Does she rollerblade? • Who are his references? • What were her grades in high school? • Other_____

"The dating process has become a script that must be followed down to the slightest detail," the website reads. "For example, wearing a yarmulke has gone from a Jewish custom to an indicator of one's political and religious views—and, by extension, one's suitability for marriage. The yeshiva one attends or attended somehow speaks volumes about the essence of the person."

Weissman and others say that such behavior in the dating scene is a recent phenomenon. When asked to speculate as to the cause, Weissman suggested that the large number of Orthodox singles now looking to get married have made the search for a mate, a matter of paramount importance among observant Jews, more fraught with pressure than ever before.

—A.S.A.

For more information: www.endthemadness.org.

Jewish Women and Breast Cancer: An Update

A study recently published in the journal Science indicates that women who carry one of the two BRCA mutations have a high risk of developing breast cancer even if they have no family history of the disease. This finding negates a previous assumption that women with the mutation but no family history were not high-risk. The study also says that women with the mutations have a 20 to 50 per cent lifetime risk of developing ovarian cancer.

The study was conducted by **Mary-Claire King,** the University of Washington scientist who discovered the BRCA-1 gene in 1994. In an interview on NPR, she explained that all her subjects were Ashkenazi Jewish women because they have particular BRCA-1 and -2 mutations that are easy to detect. According to the Human Genome Project at the University of Washington, 2 per cent of Ashkenazi Jews carry one of the mutations.

The news, however, is not all bad. The study also showed that women with the mutations were less likely to develop breast cancer if they exercise during adolescence and maintain a healthy lifestyle as adults. ■

—A.S.A.

Barbie's Jewish? Who Knew?

In September the Saudi religious police began a campaign against Barbie dolls, which, although officially banned from the Kingdom for the past 10 years, can be purchased on the black market. Speaking by telephone from Medina, Islam's second holiest place, to the Associated Press, a spokesman for the Saudi Committee for the Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice denounced Barbie as "a symbol of decadence to the perverted West." Criticizing the doll's "revealing clothes," he more than once referred to Barbie as "Jewish," thereby perpetuating the age-old anti-Semitic canard about Jewish women as whores.

Readers Respond

THE JEWISH HALF

Your Fall 2003 issue was especially thought-provoking for me ["Half Jewish? Not Jewish Enough? Half of a Mixed Couple? Get Your Measuring Cup"], being as I am the Jewish half of an interfaith marriage…and also the daughter of an (Orthodox) convert to Judaism.

I was especially interested to read your editor's commentary about intermarriage dynamics being dependent on whether the Jewish spouse is the female or male. I too have noticed many of the same things (such as that Jewish men are "allowed" to let the Jewishness of their kids slide, but women cannot.) My personal pet peeve is with (many) Jewish men who always struck me as being quite shallow as compared to Gentile men. When I was still dating I met many Jewish men who were extremely fatphobic, going so far as to ask women their dress size. I didn't like to see women judged based on their size.

For me it has been easier raising Jewish children with a Gentile partner who is very Judeophilic (as my husband is), than it would have been with a very assimilated Jewish man (which was almost all I met when dating.) My husband originally stems from a Christian background that holds a great love for the Jewish people for Biblical reasons…consequently, he has always been very supportive of raising our children as Jews, and has gone out of his way to insure they have a Jewish homelife. I cannot say that many Jewish men would have done the same.

Annette L. Ravinsky-Fleeger
Washington Township, NJ

A PLEDGE OF SWEET PARTNERING

The article by Shai Cherry on the *ketubah* and *arubah* ["Arubah: A Pledge of Sweet Partnering", LILITH 28.2, Summer 2003, pp. 18-19] is interesting, and raises new questions and ideas. Unfortunately, in my opinion, it presents the traditional *ketubah* in an unjustified negative way. It also may cause readers to feel that the fact that having a decorated *ketubah* hanging in their home is a terrible, foolish mistake.

One should not forget that for at least six centuries, maybe more, decorated *ketubot* were common, at least among those who could afford them. Often the decorations included biblical verses from Song of Songs, describing love, as well as artistic depictions, like doves, which are supposed to give the same feelings. Jews knew the content of the text, and still considered the *ketubah* as a positive, one may even say "loving", or "loveable" text. Otherwise, they would not have devoted so much energy, time and money to embellish them. In many ways, the content became secondary. The readers, or better said, the viewers of the text, considered it to be related to a successful, loving new relationship.

Shai Cherry suggests in the article to create a second document that he calls "arubah," a document that will speak about the love and the commitments of the couple. In the "arubah" presented in the article, there is also a reminder that the marriage might end. In this, the *arubah* is mentioning unfortunate outcomes such as divorce of death, just like the *ketubah*. Do we need an additional document? Many people already have such texts in their *ketubot*. In the overwhelming majority of bilingual *ketubot* today (and I am not referring to the Hebrew-Aramaic mélange, but to a distinct English section) the English text is not a translation of the Hebrew-Aramaic one, but a totally independent text that speaks, just like the suggested *arubah*, of love and commitment to Jewish values.

About the name *arubah* itself: although the name is interesting, rhymes nicely with the word *ketubah*, and well justified in the article, it should be noted that for many people immersed in classic Jewish sources, the first association of the word *Arubah* is with…a divorce bill! This is how the commentator Rashi (1040-1105) explains this word in the first book of Samuel, chapter 17, verse 18, basing himself on the Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Ketubbot*, page 9b. For him and for the Talmud, the "Arubot" that David was asked to bring to his brothers who were in the combat field, were nothing else but conditional divorce bills. The nice name *arubah* could be kept for the new type of document, but it should be mentioned that this term has, in rabbinic tradition, an opposite connotation.

In short: Cherry's article is good and interesting. An *arubah* can be proudly hung by those who wish to have it. But there is no reason whatsoever to hide one's nicely decorated *ketubah*. Both documents, or any one of them, can be proud, joyful signs of a house filled with both love and Judaism.

Evyatar Marienberg
by e-mail

PS. No matter if you have a decorated ketubah *on your wall or not, thisbeautiful tour of decorated and not decorated* ketubot *will be a treat.http://jnul.huji.ac.il/dl/ketubbot*

READING THE DIARY

I enjoyed reading the thoughtful responses of writers marking Anne Frank's 75th birthday in your fall issue.

Although I am aware of the difficulties of choosing which writers to include, I am sorry that you did not include S.L. Wisenberg. Throughout both of her books, *The Sweetheart Is In* and, more recently, *Holocaust Girls: History, Memory and Other Obsessions,* she speaks of the significance of Anne Frank's story to her while growing up. *Holocaust Girls* also contains the moving fictional piece, "Margot's Diary," about what Anne's sister's life and writings might have been. As Wisenberg writes, "Perhaps her diary was darker—she

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LILITH welcomes articles, fiction, poetry, and memoirs. We reserve the right to edit letters. No submissions can be returned without SASE.

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was older, quieter, frailer. More naturally introspective. Perhaps she did not write that she believed that people were good at heart."

Thanks for all your good work.

Julia Wolf Mazow
Houston, Texas

P.S. As I recall, LILITH published Wisenberg's short story, "Malka the Fat Girl," in 1984 in a special fiction issue.

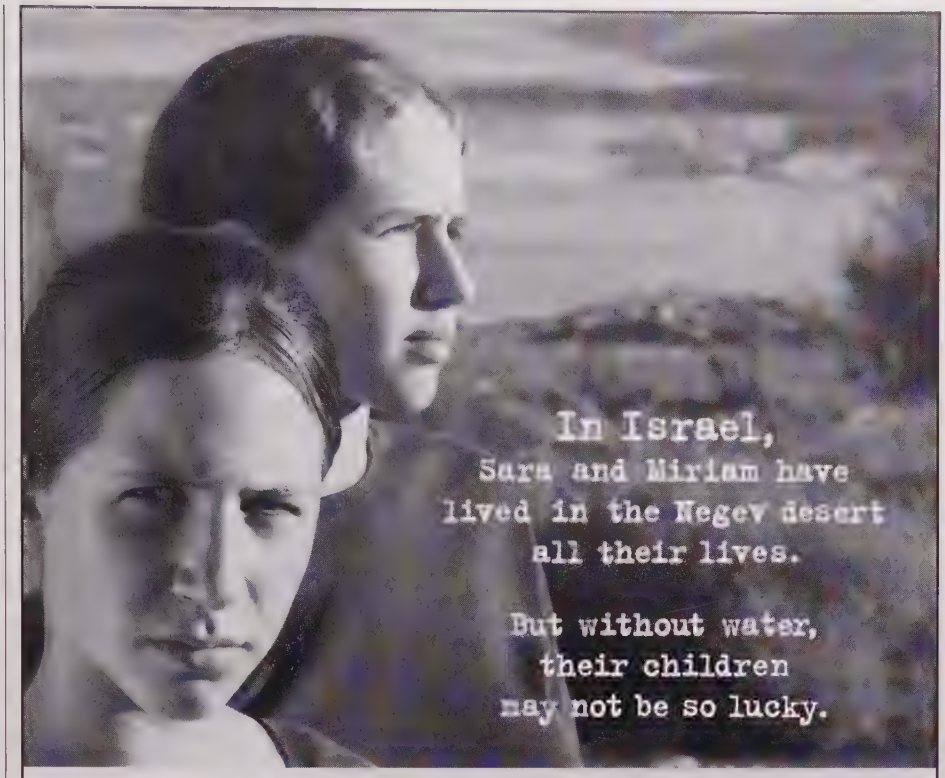
CORRECTION

In discussing our book, reviewer Rebecca Schwartz mentioned that the book "covers much of the same material" as our original book, *Written Out of History.* In fact, at least 80% of the material in *The JPS Guide to Jewish Women* is new. It features all the most recent research by feminist historians whose work only began after *Written Out of History* and contains quotes and writings from women themselves, some never before published.

Emily Taitz, Sondra Henry, Cheryl Tallan

[Because of an editing error in the original review, LILITH offers here the original—unedited—comments of the reviewer.]

The JPS Guide *covers some of the same material as* Written Out of History, *Emily Taitz and Sondra Henry's 1988 volume, which highlights a smaller selection of some of these same women. For example, both books discuss the Talmudist Beruriah of the second century. In* Written Out of History *the authors begin with background on the Talmudic era and then introduce Beruriah with examples of her wisdom and wit as found in textual sources. In the* JPS Guide, *Taitz and Henry offer the same examples, but delve further into Beruriah herself, noting that recent scholarship suggests she may actually be a composite of two or more women.*



For Sara and Miriam, Israel is home. Their parents settled in the Negev over 30 years ago. Sara and Miriam know everything there is about this region. Except for one thing. How can they continue living here without water? A 12-year drought has ravaged Israel, especially the Negev. Unless water is provided soon, Sara, Miriam and young people like them will not be able to call it home much longer.

Jewish National Fund has pledged to build 75 life-sustaining reservoirs throughout Israel and the Negev, so young families can continue calling Israel home for generations to come. They are the future of Israel. And they need your help now.

JNF has been the caretaker of the land of Israel on behalf of Jewish people everywhere for over a century. JNF's water projects have significantly increased Israel's water resources through reservoir and dam construction, river rehabilitation, water conservation and recycling. But much more still needs to be done. We can do it. All we need is for you to do your part. Please give generously. Together, we can make the desert bloom and our people flourish.

To donate, call your local Jewish National Fund office at 1-888-JNF-0099 or visit www.jnf.org.

Or mail your contribution to: JNF, Israel Forever Campaign, 42 East 69th St., New York, NY 10021

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Why Write a Patient's Life as a Short Story?

BY JULIE HEIFETZ

As a 57-year-old Jewish woman, the daughter of a physician from the days when medicine was practiced as both an art and a calling, I am appalled by the predicament in which we, patients and healthcare professionals alike, now find ourselves.

"Time to get to know each patient?" a young resident laughed sardonically. "That would be so nice. But it's just not possible with the number of people we have to see in a day." In addition to the time constraints mandated by managed care, developments in pharmacology and technology are so impressive that talking with patients has become passé. Yet the greatest increase in scores that measure patients' satisfaction in their interactions with their physicians occurs when a physician puts down her pen, indicating she is there to listen.

Determined to do what I can to humanize the healthcare experience for patients, I teach hospital staff and skilled volunteers how to write the short stories of incoming patients.

This program relies on volunteers working alongside staff. Writing the stories requires additional skills for the volunteers, which they learn and practice in training sessions. (For the women, it has taken longer to find their voices as writers than it has to feel authentic as listeners.)

The use of stories in hospitals to help people heal seems to me not only inherently Jewish but also so female, and I came to it via my work with Holocaust survivors.

As a Jewish child I knew the power of the story. My only positive memories of religious school were those times when our teacher read Sholom Aleichem, Isaac Bashevis Singer, or other Jewish writers, though none of them were women. The stories redeemed the entire religious school experience for me, and I looked forward each year to re-reading the story of the Exodus at Passover, when we repeated out loud with family and friends who we were and where we came from.

My childhood interest in listening to stories led me to study psychology. I was trained to elicit and reframe the stories people told in order to help them heal. But it was my participation in the Oral History Project of the St. Louis Center for Holocaust Studies that led me to discover the therapeutic benefit of *writing* people's stories for them. Writing had always been my way of dealing with emotions, sorting things out, thinking deeply about a subject. Listening to survivors' stories, I had no other way of coping than to write. I wrote first-person narrative poems in the survivors' voices, and shaped their stories.

Wanting to thank the people I interviewed for participating in the oral history project, I gave the survivors copies of their taped interviews. They were less enthusiastic about the tapes than I had anticipated. They didn't like their voices, felt critical of the way they told the stories—the silences, the crying, the length of the unedited interviews. Since many went on for five or more hours, they believed that no one in their families would listen to the tapes in their entirety.

And so in addition, I gave them copies of what I had written based on the interviews: narratives in their own voices, condensed and crafted as I understood them. I was amazed by the results. The survivors loved them. Many who had not wept as they told their stories cried when they read them. They said I had captured their essence on the page, telling their story as they wished it to be told. As audience, reading their own stories, they were able to hear themselves as I had heard them and feel for themselves what I felt, tremendous sadness and rage about all that they had experienced, respect for their ability and the courage to speak about the horror. I had entered their stories in a way that demonstrated I was with them in their pain and in their resilience, and that I cared.

Humanizing healthcare is so Jewish, and so female.

From that experience, some survivors were able to begin their own writing. Others felt freed from the omnipresence of their Holocaust experiences. And though I will never forget the time I spent interviewing and writing about the Holocaust,

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I too have moved on professionally, taking what I learned from that experience and working for 25 years with other disempowered people with stories to tell: students at risk, women who have been sexually abused, prisoners, people with cancer, geriatric patients and those suffering from traumatic brain damage, strokes and other life-altering conditions or illnesses.

The Vital Patient Story that developed from my work in the Holocaust Oral History Project reflects Jewish ethics: treat every individual with kindness, compassion and humanity.

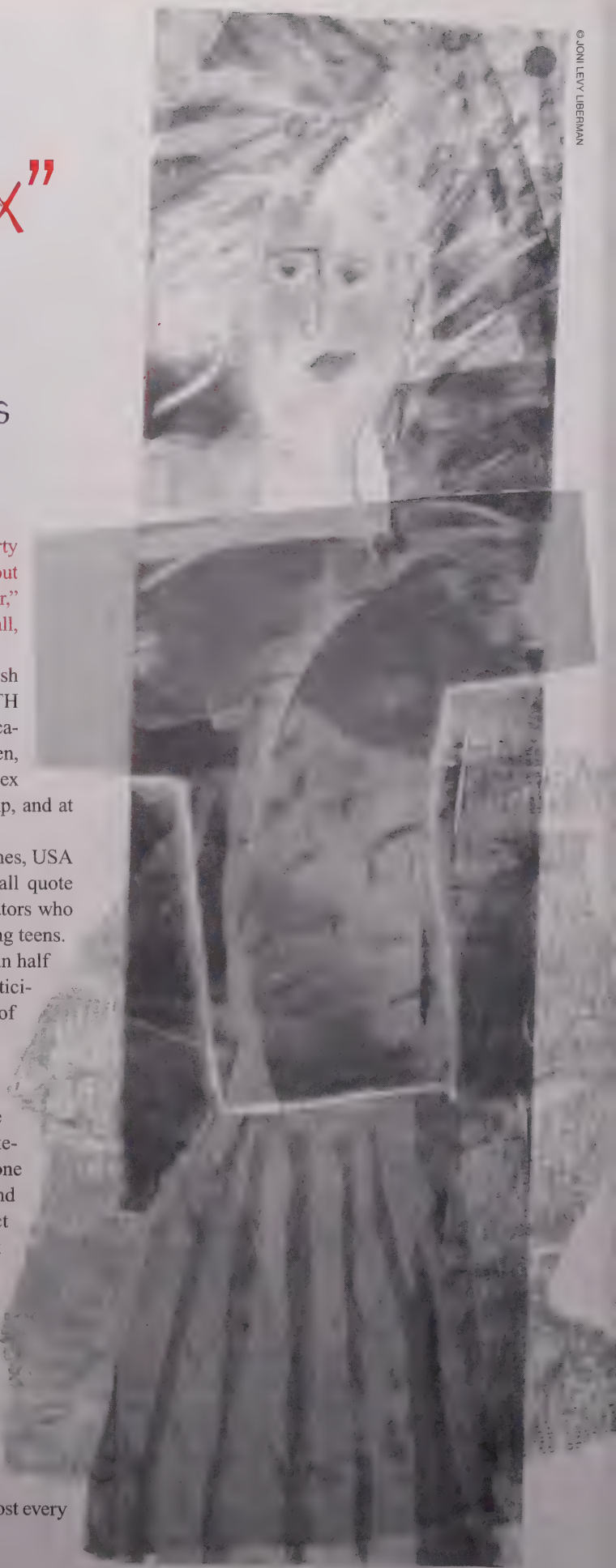
Here's how it works: The one- or two-page stories are placed in the front of the patient's medical charts so that physicians and nurses who read them can quickly come to know their patients better. The stories create a connection between the professional and the patient, one human being to another. It doesn't take an hour of the physician's time to gather and write the story, only a moment to read it. Employing the techniques of good fiction writing, the stories are compelling and moving, told in the patients' voices. The better the interview and the quality of the writing, the more power the story has, and the more beneficial, revealing what matters most to the person who's ill. It is a way to fulfill our mission as Jews not only to save individual lives, but to help repair the world. This project honors the individual by listening to her story and writing it, using it to inform and connect others with the experience. One patient with aphasia, a language disorder that resulted from a stroke, summed up the program, saying, "You write our stories. You understand. You make everyone feel like a mensch."

As I witness the early results of the program, with patients who suffer less depression and anxiety for having their stories known, and staff more committed to the field of healing for being more deeply involved with their patients, I can feel my father smile. ■

JULIE HEIFETZ, writer/performer/counselor, is a consultant for healthcare organizations.

They Say "It's Not Sex"

But experts call it "an oral sex epidemic." What do Jewish teen girls think is really going on?



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When "Sex in the City" features a bat mitzvah party where the precocious 13-year-old girls talk about performing oral sex on the guys "to be popular," we're tempted to blow it off, as it were. After all, this is television, not real life.

While this is certainly not a behavior exclusive to Jewish teens, the episode in question does spotlight a practice LILITH has been hearing about for several years from parents, educators, counselors and adolescent girls themselves. Unbidden, they have spoken to Lilith about the prevalence of oral sex among young teens—at parties, on school grounds, at camp, and at the back of the bus.

Reports on National Public Radio, in The New York Times, USA Today, The Washington Post and the Detroit Free Press all quote specialists in adolescent medicine, psychiatrists and educators who agree that oral sex is a widely popular practice among young teens. USA Today reports an online sex survey in which more than half the 10,000 respondents were under age 14; 25% had participated in oral sex; a psychiatrist speculates that one-third of middle-school girls have performed oral sex on boys. SIECUS, the renowned Sexuality Information and Education Council of the US, has published dramatic findings about what teens are doing, and discusses one study in which 24% of teens surveyed said oral sex was likely to be an activity in their "casual" relationships. At least one Jewish teen website has run a jokey sex "test" on oral sex and other practices. And this doesn't take into account the fact that most surveys on teen sexual activity don't even ask about oral sex "and most do not question the youngest teens," according to Sara Seims, a past president of the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

No one is suggesting, even for a moment, that Jewish teens are leading the oral sex revolution. But they may have earlier and more frequent opportunities for sexual contact in a supercharged social milieu than their non-Jewish peers. The rush of elaborate parties at age 13 and younger—parties which may include unsupervised bus rides to and from the party venue—means that there is a context, repeated almost every week in season, for getting it together.

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A random selection of adult women I spoke to as this report was being edited—writers, artists, foundation executives—agreed that many young teens know this activity is going on, and say that oral sex is "no big deal." Almost every one of these Jewish woman with children between the ages of 10 and 20 had the same response when I told them what we were writing about: No surprise. Many of them reacted immediately to tell me their kids assert, "Don't worry. It's not sex."

Despite the frequency and consistency of these anecdotal reports from adults and on some Jewish teen websites, and despite the widely publicized reports from sexuality researchers on oral sex and young teen girls, Jewish schools, camps and youth groups don't seem to be taking note of this sexual behavior. There is plenty of attention paid to crisis issues relating to girls' bodies (eating disorders, cutting, low self esteem around body image), but not to this.

To get a better sense of what's really going on, Lilith asked Ilana Kramer (Cornell '03), an experienced crisis-line counselor who is now a graduate student in gender studies, to speak to teen girls, sex educators, professionals in Jewish schools, therapists, parents, rabbis and clinic workers. From all corners, she heard them talk about the prevalence of oral sex. But she also heard teens say, again and again, that, just as I'd heard their mothers report, "It's not sex."

The reasons for this denial or demurral are more complex than mere concealment of what might be seen —especially at 13 or 14—as transgressive behavior. In a way, it's political. With so much focus on "abstinence only" education in schools, and so little frank talk about sexual feelings, anything that is not strictly defined as vaginal intercourse seems to teens to be—de facto—NOT actual sex.

As a consequence, teens see oral sex as perfectly safe, since it's "not sex" and since it is rarely discussed in health class, which focuses on protection and prevention (of AIDS and pregnancy). Unprotected oral sex does, though, carry physical risks, and the teens Kramer spoke to are dismally (and dangerously) unaware of this. And perhaps there's emotional risk as well.

There is an intimacy to this act, even if it is almost always unilateral (girls on boys). If these teen girls claim it's not intimate, we have to assume that on some level they're stifling their own responses, positive or negative.

As you read the report which follows, keep in mind the asymmetrical aspect. Girls are not getting sexual pleasure form oral sex. So what do they get? The reward of being popular with the guys? The gratification of bonding with other girls?

After more than three decades of feminist revolution—in a year when more women than men are applying to medical school, and women are entering the rabbinate in unprecedented numbers—we learn that many Jewish girls and young women still think their worth is defined by how they please men (or, in this case, 13-year-old boys).

Well, we ask here some feminist questions and some Jewish ones.

The feminist ones are about power and control. Who's in charge here? Is it the girls, since they still have all their clothes on and they are not the vulnerable ones this time? Or is it the guys, who — as our informants put it — get to choose which girls they'll allow to gratify them? Therapists and sex educators wrestle with this conundrum too, as you'll see.

At the other end of the spectrum, there seems to be an increased interest in being shomer negia—a term young people are using to describe themselves when they refrain from all touching with the opposite sex. The term has even entered the vocabulary of non-Orthodox teens as a way to calibrate sexual behavior. At the same time, we're hearing some young teens at Orthodox schools and camps interpreting oral and anal sex to violate no precept against premarital sex, still remaining, "technically," virgins. Brittany Spears meets halakha? Time to rethink a more realistic Jewish sex ethic?

A more widely applicable Jewish question is about the party celebrations that sometimes accompany bar and bat mitzvahs. Not to get into the tired discussion about over-the-top parties,

Are the girls in control because they have their clothes on?

but…we need to start treating these young teens (13, 14) like the children they still are in many ways, though on the cusp of adulthood. Although this milestone signals the beginning of Jewish adulthood—with increased ritual responsibility, for example—it doesn't mean adulthood in all ways. What kind of values are transmitted to the young celebrants? Adults aware of oral sex practices have a valuable opportunity to explore sexual values with teens in some very practical ways.

At those bat and bar mitzvah parties, with grownup women often dressed seductively and everyone in a party mood, young teens sense the sexual energy in the air. Some parties feature hired dancers in tight outfits cavorting seductively with each other and with both the kids and the adults. This combined with little oversight (grownups often in separate rooms) can be a setting for some sexual behaviors in the kids inspired by the adults.

Partly this behavior is just teens being teens. But it's also a matter of Jewish parents and the Jewish community giving them opportunity and perhaps even some subtle encouragement to experiment sexually, aided and abetted by peer pressure. National Federation of Temple Youth director Andrew Davids told our reporter, about the bnai mitzvah experience: "We're sending a message, 'You're gonna have a big party and then be an adult,' and then we're surprised when they do nothing but party and do what they perceive to be adult behavior."

An indication of how casually teens view oral sex is that all the girls aged 13 to 17 Ilana Kramer interviewed for this article were willing to have their real names used. However, LILITH has decided to protect their privacy by using pseudonyms. The people you'll meet in this report who are identified only by first name are Jewish teens whose names and home towns have been changed. But their ages and their words are exactly as reported.

—SUSAN WEIDMAN SCHNEIDER

Teen Sex That's "No Big Deal"

BY ILANA KRAMER

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The scene is a lavish bat mitzvah affair, replete with giant martini glasses and girls in slinky hipster dresses. The dolled-up bat mitzvah girl is discussing sex with her two pals. An older woman overhears and comes over to scold her. "Please." the girl retorts. "I've been giving blowjobs since I'm 12". Her best bud chimes in, "It's the only way to get guys to like you."

Ok, so this wasn't your daughter's bat mitzvah (sigh of relief). Or your niece's, or your own. It's an episode of HBO's Sex and the City. But instead of shrugging off this episode, titled "Hot Child in the City," as a tawdry exaggeration, maybe we need to ask why, on one of America's most widely watched TV shows, there is a depiction of a Jewish 13-year-old girl bragging about her adeptness at performing oral sex.

Barbara Victor, an educator with the Jewish Family Services in Montreal, says it in a nutshell: "Whether your kids are engaged in oral sex or not, it's something kids are talking about." And so were the more than two dozen teen girls and their teachers and counselors LILITH interviewed this fall. They made it clear that girls are performing oral sex on boys in significant numbers and that young teens have ample opportunity to do so at elaborate and largely unsupervised bar and bat mitzvah parties. Worse yet, blow jobs are now seen as "no big deal," simply part of the range of activities that many 12- and 13-year-old girls engage in casually as part of their social lives. Seventeen-year-old Sari, from Long Island, sums up my research well: "You come into middle school and you have no idea what it is and you leave middle school knowing."

Just a 'Suburban Myth'?

In the recently released feature film "Thirteen," 13-year-old Tracy and her best friend Evie take out their chewing gum to perform oral sex on the two boys they are dating that night. And this past October, on an "Oprah!" episode entitled "The Double Lives of Teens," Michelle Burford, a writer for O Magazine who interviewed 50 teen girls and their mothers about the secret sex lives of teens, explained an American teen phenomenon dubbed rainbow parties: "All of the girls put on lipstick and each one puts her mouth around the penis of the gentleman or gentlemen who are there to receive favors and makes a mark in a different place on the penis, hence, the term rainbow."

Elissa, a 13-year-old from southern California, is in the eighth grade at a private school. Oral sex, she says, is "so common now, people don't even think of it as bad anymore. It's cool if you do it." She says girls she knows "give blow jobs" at house parties and dances and sometimes on school grounds as well. She reports that "some people have done it in the batting cage at their school, because no one goes near this area."

Among Jewish teens, the opportunity presents itself repeatedly in non-school settings as well, and relatively early: at bar and bat mitzvah parties. It happens, we were told, outside the party, in a bathroom, or maybe even an open room with a pool table in it. There is a lot of making out and "freaking," today's word for bumping and grinding. The truly troubling element here is not what might in an earlier age have been termed necking or petting, but rather unilateral, ubiquitous girl-on-boy oral sex. Jen, 17, an eleventh-grader at a public school in Manhattan, says that "Oral sex happens at bar/bat mitzvahs all the time. It starts in seventh and eighth grade." This assertion is repeated by teens in private schools, public schools, Jewish day schools.

Baltimore-based sex educators Amy and Charles Miron, say that oral sex is known among some teens as "the bar mitzvah present." Robin Stein is the director of The Response Center, an agency that staffs medical clinics and other services for Chicago-area teens, about one-third of them Jewish. "I have been hearing for three years about sex on school buses and on the buses on the way to bar/bat mitzvah parties around Chicago — oral sex primarily," she says. "A reporter asked me do I have

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a source for the bat mitzvah bus story and asked, 'Is this just a suburban myth?' I said, 'No, I cannot imagine it is all just a myth—we hear these stories so often.'"

Myra Greenberg Glassman of San Diego tells of chaperoning a trip for American Jewish high school students traveling through Eastern Europe. Greenberg, realizing that girls at the back of the bus had been involved in oral sex, asked them why they did it. The reply, "We were bored on the bus." The girls told Glassman oral sex was "no big deal."

Although parents say they feel confident about supervision at Jewish activities, we've had reports of oral sex on trips and at Jewish summer camps, as well as at those bar/bat mitzvah party buses. Daniel Kopf, 20, an NYU undergraduate who was a camper and then a counselor at Camp Ramah in Massachusetts, says "I learned about sex at Jewish camp." Kopf recalls that after Havdallah services, campers would go into the woods in pairs "to do sexual things." Although no interviewees would go on the record about this, we have heard similar reports from Orthodox camps. Jen, who has been a counselor at Camp Eisner in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, says, "I promise there's oral sex happening at the camps.... Every night after 10:30, kids go hook up with each other behind the cabins." Sari, 17, from Long Island, New York, reports that when she was a counselor, she heard that some of her campers, going into eighth grade, were regularly engaging in oral sex. "It's a new experience, but the kids haven't learned about what a big deal it is or about the STIs [sexually transmitted infections]." she adds. "They say that because they 'haven't gotten around a lot,' they don't have to worry about contracting STIs"

Why Is It Happening?

Among educators and counselors, explanations vary for why girls so willingly, and apparently casually, give boys blow jobs. Nora Gelperin, a Rutgers University sex educator created a workshop for teachers two years ago on "Oral Sex and Young Teens: The New Third Base?" because when she went into schools to talk about about pregnancy and contraception she kept hearing about oral sex. "At the back of the bus, in classrooms, in gyms when no one's around, all over school it's happening." Gelperin reports hearing stories "all the time" about seventh-grade girls giving "blow jobs" to tenth-grade boys in order to elevate their social status. Abigail Natenshon, a psychotherapist in Chicago's North Shore suburbs who treats children and young adults, concurs. Natenshon adds: "Though most girls would not admit they are desperate, many youngsters will do anything to assure peer acceptance. Girls do what boys expect." In this way, notes Gelperin, oral sex may be right in line with how we socialize girls. "We teach them to please others. It's about pleasing and caring for someone else's needs, though it is not necessarily in her best interest."

Laura Kaufman, executive director of the Jewish Women's Foundation of Metropolitan Chicago, also wonders about the ways in which adult women can offer more support. "I'm baffled that girls are so desperate to be accepted by peers, and by boys. They don't feel empowered to say, why am I doing this? Do I really want this?"

Others, however, believe that there's a payoff here for girls, too. It's power. Montreal Gazette reporter Donna Nebenzahl, who interviewed teens in June for an article on oral sex, told LILITH, "Some girls say it's a power thing that they have. ... In order to give a blow job, you're in control of it, even though it's really about servicing the boy. For girls, there's a certain status, because your friends do it, you're gonna be cool too, you'll be part of the group, this is the line." Jen, the Manhattan eleventh-grader, agrees. "What girls get from it is reputation, popularity, and guys will stick around more. If you give head to Billy, he'll make you popular and then he'll tell more guys and if you give head to them, you'll get even more popular."

The fact that girls believe giving a blow job isn't sex also explains, in part, their willingness. Says Jen, "In seventh- and eighth-graders, they don't see oral sex as any different than groping or kissing." Part of this attitude, ironically enough, may come from the cultural importance of virginity. Pop star icons like virginity-boaster Britney Spears send a disturbing

Why aren't girls asking "Do I really want this?"

mixed message to teen girls. "Britney says she's a virgin," explains Adrienne Verrilli, director of communications at SIECUS, "but also is very sexy, which sends the mixed message that you should be both, and creates a pedestal of what you should be to boys. It's complex." NYU Gender Studies professor Julian Carter calls oral sex in young teens "a creative response." She says, "Oral sex allows young teens to reach a compromise of peer approval and maintaining virgin status."

Carter also views the oral sex phenomenon as part of an adolescent power dynamic. "At 12 and 13 you have no control over money, freedom, anyway, so this may be a means of attaining power. It's precisely at this age of early adolescence that there's a drop-off in power; girls' sense of self-worth changes dramatically at this age, this is when they are finding out they have the less power within a patriarchal system and begin doing less well in school."

One thing is for certain, no matter why girls are giving boys blow jobs, they're not getting much in return. "Although girls say they do it, they don't say they actually like it," says Barbara Victor. And boys are reportedly not so obliging. Daniel Kopf confesses that "When I was 14 and first heard one of my friends went down on a girl, we were all like 'Ewwww!' I think there's more stigma for guys going down on girls." Jen says, "The girl always does it because guys say it's gross but for a girl to do it it's cool. Also, it's not considered macho for a guy to do it. Girls also don't like to get it because they're insecure about their bodies, it's always girls doing it to guys."

But, some observers speculate that this very lack of mutuality may be what's appealing to girls. "There is a sense that women are denigrating themselves if they want to receive pleasure," says Julian Carter. Nora Gelperin points out that this fear of addressing pleasure affects the words used in teaching girls about sex. "In sex education, we don't talk about the

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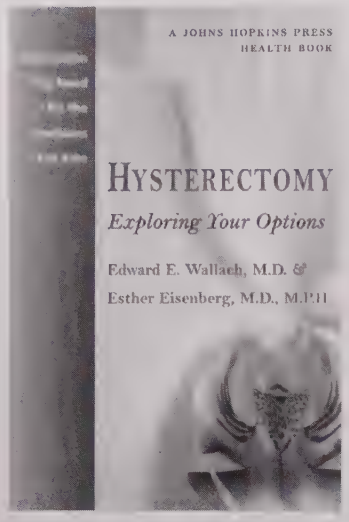

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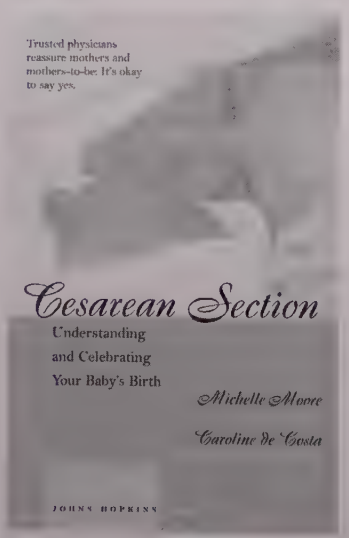
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Some Thoughts for Adults Who Care About Teens

LILITH suggests that, for all the complex issues driving young teen girls to engage in oral sex with boys, there are steps adults can take to intervene, or at least to inform themselves.

- Suggest that youth groups and schools bring in health practitioners to talk to middle schoolers about the fact that even these non-intercourse practices are both sexual and risky. In Jewish schools and youth programs, the focus can be on how strongly the tradition emphasizes that one must take good care of one's body; there is no mind-body split in Judaism. It's OK, and very "Jewish" to talk about health (But remember that scare tactics alone have little credibility.)

- Be clear about mutual pleasure in sex. Jewish sources have lots to say here, including the Talmudic injunction that a man must pleasure his wife first. Teens need to hear that sex is neither about controlling nor servicing the "other."

- In practical terms, parents can use young adult chaperones to be the heavies at bar and bat mitzvah parties. "I was just at a bar mitzvah last month," said Rabbi Joui Hessel of the Washington Hebrew Congregation. "The family hired two college-age kids to watch the kids, who walked around the party, in the bathrooms. I don't even think the kids noticed the chaperones were there because they were young adults."

- Parents and camp counselors can meet before the summer season for discussions on sexual behavior and how to educate their campers. "We've entrusted an enormous amount of responsibility to young adult counselors without much training," Barbara Victor worries. "Parents are giving kids over to 16-year-old counselors for two months and those 16-year olds must be equipped to know what age-appropriate behavior is."

- Put forward the idea to youth group leaders that sexual behaviors are appropriate topics for discussion in girls' groups.

- The school nurse at Manhattan's Hunter High School told the New York Times this spring that she keeps boxes of mint-flavored condoms in her office for the students, and marks the box "for oral sex only." Is it farfetched to imagine that nurses at Jewish day schools and camps can be trained to talk to girls? Then the young teens considering this behavior have a chance not only to protect themselves but—importantly—to be reminded that, yes, oral sex is sex.

- Check out some websites that address teen sexuality, often with frankness and tenderness too:

gurl.com
iwannaknow.org
jvibe.com/jvibrations
kff.org
MzVibe.com
noah-health.org/english/sexuality/sexuality.html
scarleteen.com
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orgasm or clitoris. Some textbooks don't even have the clitoris shown in it. Instead, there's a focus on the fallopian tubes. Enough of the fallopian tubes. Girls have a right to be educated about the clitoris."

It may also be that oral sex is considered "safe." Ellen Kanter, a nurse-educator for the Family Life Education program at the Lake County Health Department in Illinois, works with low-income Latinas and African-Americans and educates them about sex and preventing pregnancy. Kanter calls what's going on among Jewish teens an "oral sex epidemic."

What Girls Need Now

"I went to a PTA meeting three years ago at the high school here and somebody brought up oral sex and that it's going on at the bar mitzvah buses, and since that time, I've been keeping my ears open," said Gail Squires, a Jewish mother in Great Neck, New York.

But experts in this area say that most parents do not know what their children are doing when no one is supervising them.

Lilith's exploration of this admittedly upsetting subject has convinced us that kids today are not getting adequate guidance on sex. It's treated, as sex educator Gelperin put it, like a plumbing lesson. "But teens are telling us they want to talk about love, the feelings, the difficult issues, and how to ask someone out." When Myra Greenberg Glassman, who chaperoned the Jewish teen trip to Europe, tried to discuss the back-of-the-bus situation with parents, many insisted that their kids were not involved. Yet she was surprised to hear from her own teenage daughter how frequently oral sex was a subject of conversation among the bat mitzvah crowd. Parents need to get beyond their own denial and talk to their kids, says Barbara Victor, not only about sex, but about its implications. "We have to begin to talk about what it means to be sexual. This is the piece that sex ed programs are lacking," she says.

Planned Parenthood educator Heather Samel, of Nassau County, Long Island, explains precisely where schools many be going wrong. Many schools, Samel says, still use fear-based tactics which promote abstinence-only education. "Abstinence-only programs exaggerate consequences, saying you will die because of HIV. While it may delay the onset of sex, these programs are not talking oral and anal sex, so kids think, ok, I'm not gonna get pregnant or HIV from oral or anal sex. They don't think of oral and anal sex as sex even though that is what it is. And since the subject of oral sex is not discussed in schools, many early teens are unaware of STIs such as herpes, chlamydia, and gonorrhea, of which Samel reports they get many cases.

Some Jewish educators are now thinking about sex ed in a new light. Rabbi Andrew Davids, director of the Reform Movement's National Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY), and his staff have created two single-sex groups, Nashim (females) and G'varim (males), focusing on gender identity. Ultimately, Davids says, "The Jewish response to teen sexuality is not just to say no, but we want them to be responsible for it, we want them to own the choices they make, that what they do is appropriate for them."

Long-time sex educators Amy and Charles Miron are the authors of the book How to Talk with Teens About Love, Relationships, and S-E-X. They also run a sexuality retreat for the ninth-graders at Washington Hebrew Congregation, in Washington, D.C., in which they teach everything from Jewish values and the holiness of the body to the proper use of dental dams and what to expect at your first gynecological appointment ["Jewish Sex-Ed," Winter 2002-03]. The Mirons say that "The Jewish community as a whole is not responsive to this [oral sex among teens]. They tend to focus on reproduction, but they don't get into the exchange of values, such as when is the right time for sex and with the right person." In fact, claims Amy Miron, "The more sexual information you give a kid, the later their sexual debut and the more conservative they are."

It's time to shift some of the focus away from grades and to realize that middle school is a crucial time when girls are forging attitudes—and having experiences—of which their parents are often totally unaware. And it's time that teen girls had an opportunity to discuss and maybe even refuse these intimate behaviors. ■

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Under Jewish law, an aguna is, literally, an "anchored woman," one whose husband refuses to grant her a divorce.

Confessions of an Aguna Activist

BY C. DEVORA HAMMER

CAREN LOEBEL-FRIED

I. There was already a knot of people huddled at the demonstration in Borough Park, Brooklyn by the time we arrived, on that sunny Sunday morning. It was 20 degrees below zero.

A woman out front took the megaphone and began her admonishment, "Avraham Zvi Silverstein* is in contempt of Jewish court. He refuses to give his wife a *get* (writ of divorce). He is an abomination amongst the People of Israel. The *bais din* [Jewish court] has asked us to do everything we can to help this woman. He is a shame to the whole community!" The demonstrators trudged around the courtyard under this man's apartment, chanting "Avraham Zvi Silverstein, give your wife a get!" "Free Esther Silverstein!" "We demand a get for Esther and all the Agunot like her! Even in the freedom of America, we have women chained to their husbands—set them free!"

Then the aguna, Esther, took the megaphone. She was a young woman with a beret over her wig, large glasses, very plain. "I just want to ask Avraham Zvi to let me go, I want to lead a normal life…." She started to cry.

A black-garbed man walking down the street paused, listened, and started yelling, **"She's just a feminist, that lady with the megaphone, she doesn't care about Jewish law,** just likes to make trouble! Why does Borough Park need a demonstration?"

But other, similarly black-garbed men shouted him down, "What's this got to do with feminism? Who said she was a feminist? Esther Silverstein's husband won't give her a get and the bais din told her friends to help her out, that's all it is!"

One woman asked me "And how long has Esther been waiting for her get?" When I told her it was five years, she snorted, "That's nothing, *I've* been chained to my ex for 15 years!"

Our final destination was the shul where Mr. Silverstein usually came for afternoon prayers. We had a petition with hundreds of signatures on it. Esther was the last to sign. A rotund, long-coated Hasid hovered around her as the demonstration broke up. "Why don't you call me any more?" he asked her in a sing-song voice. "You know," she answered, "the telephone rings at both ends."

How long will she wait? I wondered, as I took the subway home.

II. The Jewish law of divorce has its source in Deuteronomy (24:1).

> *"A man takes a wife and possesses her. She fails to please him because he finds* ervat davar *(hard to translate) in her, and he writes a bill of divorcement, hands it to her, and sends her away from his house."*

From this passage, early Jewish decisors learned a number of things: a divorce can only take place through a personal action of the husband, "with his full consent." A Jewish court does not have the power to issue a decree of divorce on its own. (In contrast, in America, divorce is affected through a decree of the courts.) The Rabbis also interpreted "ervat davar" to mean that the man could divorce his wife if he sees anything in her which does not find favor in his eyes.

Nothing in the passage from Deuteronomy indicates that a woman can initiate a divorce. However, the Talmud did provide that a wife was permitted to petition a Jewish court, under certain circumstances, to *compel* her husband to divorce her. The circumstances where compulsion is permissible include where the husband has physical defects that are deemed unendurable; where the husband fails to perform his marital duties; and, according to some, where the wife says "he is [sexually] repulsive to me," or where the husband beats her.

Why is it so important to obtain a Jewish divorce? A married woman who lives with another man is considered an adulteress; any child born of the adulterous union is a *mamzer*. A *mamzer* may not marry anyone except another *mamzer* or a convert. The status of *mamzer* lasts for *ten generations*—some say forever. So even a woman who does not consider herself religious needs a get: who wants to cast the pall of *mamzer* on children of a future relationship?

In contrast, if a man fails to give a get to his former wife, and then has a second relationship, he has violated no biblical prohibition. He violates the rule of the Ashkenazi (European) rabbis, which prohibits polygyny, but children of the second relationship will in no way be tainted. They are free to marry whomever they wish.

* *Names have been changed.*

PARTS OF THIS ARTICLE ARE ADAPTED FROM A PIECE IN MYJEWISHLEARNING.COM, A JOINT PROJECT OF HEBREW COLLEGE AND JEWISH FAMILY AND LIFE!

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III. About 15 years after I stood outside Avraham Zvi Silverstein's apartment demonstrating for his wife's freedom, I was invited to dinner with some new neighbors. Our host was a rough kind of man, shoving his wife around, issuing orders. Esther, our hostess, explained that the children at the table were not hers; she had a daughter who was with her father that Shabbos. Somewhere in the middle of the soup course it became clear that this very Esther was the aguna for whom we had demonstrated one freezing Sunday in Borough Park. We had helped free her, and she had chosen this life, with this man.

And I wondered then, and do now, what is it that we are freeing agunot for?

We aguna activists were and are single-mindedly focused on unchaining agunot, but not on preparing them for life afterwards.

The Children of Israel wandered in the desert for 40 years after the Exodus, before they entered the Promised Land. Women who have been "chained" for significant periods to bad husbands have much to learn before they can enjoy their freedom. Many do not know how to handle life alone, and marry badly the second time, too.

It's very easy to get caught up in the urgent and important work of getting an aguna a get. But what about the non-urgent but just as important work of helping her build a life afterwards? I believe that as freedom fighters for agunot, our duty is not just to break the chains that bind these women to their particular men, but to help them keep their freedom even *after* the get has been given. This means encouraging them to become economically and emotionally independent, and helping them steer away from future unhealthy relationships.

How can we do this? Here are some ideas:

Support groups. These should include women who are currently "chained," as well as those who have received the get. This gives women a sense of the continuum of experience from separation through divorce and life afterwards, preparing them for the high of freedom and the low of the sometimes lonely life beyond.

Ongoing counseling, and more. An aguna shouldn't fall off our "must call" lists as soon as she receives her get. She should have available, both before and after her divorce, the services of trained counselors. In addition, we must keep up with these women, not wait for them to call us in a crisis. Just like some schools regularly visit nursing homes as part of a *hesed* project, so we could each take on a list of women who might like an encouraging word once a week, and make it our business to call them. Through these long-term relationships, we can create an atmosphere of trust, and help them through their often-difficult daily lives alone or as single mothers.

"Marriage Protection" Agreements. If a former aguna decides she's ready to remarry, we should encourage her and future husband to sign a special kind of Jewish pre-nuptial agreement that could help prevent her from being an aguna again. Here is testimony of one woman, in a letter to the Beth Din of America: "As a young woman, I realized that my fairy tale marriage was just that...a fairy tale. My ex-husband had denied me a civil divorce as well as a Jewish divorce...The Jewish pre-nuptial agreement afforded me a vital tool to have this marriage dissolved. If not for this life-saving document, I would not have been able to continue forward with my Jewish life...a life which has since blossomed."

Changing societal attitudes to marriage. Before an aguna has in her hands the paper attesting to her freedom, well-meaning friends are already waiting to set her up with the next man—sometimes someone who has made another woman an aguna! The Jewish world communicates the message that marriage is the best state to be in, no matter who you are. Marriage is a difficult institution, and it is not for everyone. Singlehood is sometimes better than a bad relationship. So let's think about that blind date idea again: is it the *right* one, or just *any* one? Let's create an environment where it's less uncomfortable to be single—the ex-agunot won't be the only ones who are grateful. ■

C. DEVORA HAMMER writes the Washington column for the Australian Jewish News. Her last pieces for LILITH were "Blood Rhythms: Sex in an Orthodox Marriage" and "The Stay-at-Work Mom." She can be reached at afiued@aol.com.

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Sunken Meadow

A SHORT STORY BY ROBERTA ISRAELOFF

HADAR KIMCHY SHILOH

"So Miriam's driving to the beach tomorrow," my mother said to my father at supper, slapping two salmon croquettes on each plate stacked on the washing machine which served as our sideboard—it was Monday, that's what we always had—as if the information meant more to him than to me. A mechanic just home from work, with hands that never quite got clean no matter how hard he scrubbed, he nodded. He was eating in his sleep, in his dreams already settled in the brown easy chair stained from his hair tonic and sweaty palms, feet up.

Evelyn my just-barely-older sister rolled her eyes at the news. She put on more clothes for the beach than she did on the days we spent at the park across the street. "It's such a long drive," she whined, imagining the carsickness she'd soon feel. In the back seat, Luca always cracked up—a little too much, I thought—at the sight of Evie's head hanging out the window like a dog's.

"Sunken Meadow's a bathtub, not a beach," my father said, relishing a sip of ginger ale, wishing it were beer. He'd been in the Navy and loved the ocean—the rougher the surf, the better.

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I didn't make such fine distinctions. The way some kids waited for Christmas, that's how I waited for the summer day when we drove to Sunken Meadow with Luca and her mother. But they had it easier, Christian children, because Christmas came no matter what the weather, whereas I had to pray for sun. A single dark cloud or drop of rain could ruin everything.

Luca's real name was Elizabeth, which was my favorite because it had so many permutations. Beth, Bess, Bessie, Betty, Liza, Eliza, Lissa, Liz, Lizzie, even Lis. But we called her Luca, the last syllable curt, like French, halfway between an "a" and an "e."

She was older than I was, two grades ahead, and during the school year we saw each other only on holidays, like Halloween, when she'd be allowed to wear everything I wasn't—lipstick, high heels, a straight skirt, while I had to dress up like a stupid witch; and on Christmas, when we'd go over to her apartment to gawk at her tree. But come summer I was closer to her than her own sweat. Shorter than I, she had black hair that shone and that did anything she wanted, but mostly what I loved was that she knew things I didn't, like which shard of glass was a treasure called beach glass and which was just trash. One time, when we were walking by the water, she stopped suddenly and said, "Look at your nails." I did, and she said, "I thought so." At first she wouldn't tell me what she meant, but then she explained that if you looked at your nails by spreading them out in front of you like a starfish, that meant you were really a girl, but if you turned your palm to face you and crooked your fingers at the knuckles the way I had, well, that meant you were really a boy.

We saw each other only on holidays, when she'd be allowed to wear everything I wasn't.

I turned away so Luca wouldn't see the blush spreading under my tan but I was too late; she'd already started to smile. "Race you back," she said, knowing I couldn't beat her even with my long legs, when I was so close to tears.

Luca's was an exotic family; they could have been air-dropped into our development of red brick, six-story apartment buildings—Windsor Park, it was named, as if to trick the returning veterans it was built for into thinking that they resided somewhere in England rather than in the damp northeast corner of Bayside, Queens. For one thing, Miriam was the only woman of all my mother's friends who could drive. She learned in Berlin where she was born; that's why she spoke with an accent. Her husband was also born in Europe—Spain, I think. He took the bus and subway to work, leaving before dawn, returning after dark.

"I don't know," Luca would say when I asked her what her father, the compact and dark Roberto, did for a living. He had a beautiful smile, full of small very white teeth, almost brilliantly white, but he never spoke. I knew she was lying—she just didn't feel like telling me—but there was no way you could get Luca to do what she didn't want to.

"God," I whispered in bed that night, "let it be sunny tomorrow, please. Please let us go." I lay on my back, rigid as a saint, pushing my palms together. Jews didn't pray that way, I knew. I couldn't see much from the balcony of the synagogue I went to with my mother and Evelyn, in the dark, smelly building behind the kosher deli, but whatever the men and boys were doing down there had nothing to do with standing still and clasping their hands. Perpetual motion machines, they stomped their feet, fidgeted, moaned and swayed—doing everything they could think of to snag God's attention.

"Only Indians pray for sun," I heard Evelyn say under her breath, and then aloud, "Ma, she's talking to herself again."

"Shut *up*, Evie," I hissed at her. Her bed was about two arms' lengths away, and she was reading some book or other under the covers, using our father's Navy flashlight, stubby and battleship gray, which she snuck out of his bottom dresser drawer each evening—we weren't supposed to go through his things, God knows why—and replaced during the day after he left for work. I could see the warm circle of light under her covers, as if she were concealing a little sun.

"It's going to rain tomorrow," she said, "no matter how hard you pray—I heard it on the weather."

"Please make her shut up, God," I prayed, realizing how easy it was to slide from one prayer into the next, nothing too insignificant to ask for.

I heard the rain before I opened my eyes and when I did, I saw Evelyn smiling. What difference did it make to her, a rainy day meant she could read four books instead of three. I felt something iron inside of me, a tiny pellet, a cold iron pellet of fury at everything I couldn't control.

"You can go over to Luca's after chores," my mother said at breakfast, cheerful in her Tuesday outfit, yellow blouse and blue skirt. Outfits and chores were as regimented as dinner—Tuesdays we scrubbed the bathroom, using toothbrushes to get behind the faucets. Something about the inexhaustible amount of dirt my family inadvertently generated seem to buoy my mother, to give her hope.

Luca's family never cleaned, I realized, finally free to knock on their door. Their furniture had a thin veneer of dust, cups and plates a faint film, all of which served to dampen footsteps and conversation, as if the apartment were a cave.

Luca opened the door and motioned for me to follow her. Miriam, I figured, was doing the laundry in the basement: otherwise she'd be in the kitchen at the sliver of a table with her hand wrapped around a faintly lipstick-stained coffee cup, looking toward the window that opened to the fire escape.

"What's that song?" I asked about the number on the radio in Luca's room.

"It's 'Blowin' in the Wind,'" she said, she said, exhaling

impatience through her nose, as if I'd asked her the color of the sky. "Peter Paul and Mary. But Bob Dylan wrote it."

Names I didn't know; sounds I'd never heard. I wanted to sit on her bed and listen, to hear all the words that just kept coming, to piece the sense of it together, but Luca wasn't interested in music this morning; she walked into her parents' bedroom knowing I'd follow. Wordlessly, she knelt in front of their closet, and pulled me down beside her. Rooting around in the dark, she extracted what looked like an old circular hatbox, and from that a small wooden box with a gold clasp. "You shouldn't be doing this," I said, thinking of Evie, rifling through my father's dresser drawers.

"Look at this," Luca said. Wrapped in brittle pink tissue paper were two pieces of jewelry—a tiny gold Jewish star, smaller than a Lifesaver, the kind you could wear around your neck on a chain; and the other so beautiful I gasped.

"Is that a diamond?"

"Diamond, sapphires and rubies," Luca said.

"What is it, a pin?"

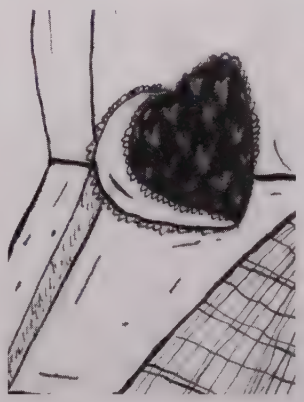
"Actually, it's called a brooch," Luca said. "My mother had another, exactly the same, but she had to use it to get out of Germany."

It wasn't that big, but it shone like a sun in the dark room, as luminous as Evelyn's flashlight.

"Why did she have to get out of Germany?" I asked.

Luca looked at me and again exhaled noisily. "Don't you know anything?" she asked.

"I know about Germany," I pouted, stung as if she'd slapped me; "I know"—though in fact I knew very little. Once a year we lit candles for people who had died like my grandfather, and my mother included one for the poor cousins, only she used the Yiddish word *nebuch* instead of "poor," the last syllable rattling around somewhere deep in her throat. Sometimes when they thought they were alone my mother and grandmother talked in a hush about people I didn't know, people with variously sibilant and guttural names like Ruchel, Chaimy, Schaindele—about letters that had arrived but then stopped, branches of the family tree dying, the genealogical scent petering out and ending in a black pit. "The letters stopped," my mother once told me; names disappeared, they were lost.



Luca walked into her parents' bedroom knowing I'd follow.

But somehow Miriam had gotten out, along with her pin. She'd made her way to London where she met Roberto on the tube and before the short ride was over he asked if he could see her that night—it was love at first sight, Luca had told me; he was going to America and he would take her, but his mother was a widow and very religious. Miriam would have to act like a Catholic if she wanted to be with him. They were married the day before they left on the boat for New York.

"You can hold it," Luca said, reaching for my hand with the brooch.

I pulled it back as if she'd dropped a flaming match in it. "I don't want to," I said, not understanding why.

"Just do what I say," she said, placing the brooch in the center of my palm and closing my fingers over it.

That's when we heard Miriam's step in the foyer. Luca clamped one hand over my mouth so I wouldn't yelp and with the other replaced both boxes in the closet just a split second before Miriam came into the bedroom pulling the shopping cart she used to transport the clean clothes. "We're going to the library," she said to her mother. "I was just looking for your umbrella."

We cut through the parking lot behind the A & P, and crossed Bell Boulevard. Behind the deli was the little house with the iron gate, now locked. A faint light emanated from a basement room I'd never noticed. "That your temple?" Luca asked.

"Sort of," I said. "We only go there in the fall." With Luca walking so quickly, it was hard to explain my family's state of religious observance. As for Luca, she went to church some Sunday mornings with her father, and every Saturday afternoon when her grandmother, the black-clad widow, came to visit. "Does your mother ever go to church?" I asked. "Or does she go to synagogue?"

"She never goes anywhere religious," Luca said, as if this were yet another fact I should have known. When we walked right past the library's entrance, I realized with a start that we were actually heading for Luca's church, the something of the Sacred Heart, which took up an entire block by itself, a mountain of craggy gray stone.

"Here's what you need to do," she said, as we huddled under the narrow overhang of a side entrance. "You go first because we can't go in at the same time, it'll look suspicious. Just walk straight ahead, count fifty steps, turn right, and you'll see a little desk with candles burning. Light three candles, hold the pin in front of you, and say a prayer. Whatever prayer you want, it doesn't matter. I'll come in right after to get you. We just can't do it together. We'll cancel each other out."

I was clutching the pin so hard my hand felt like a furnace; I worried that the stones might melt. "I don't want to," I said.

"Don't be an infant," Luca said, sounding like a mother, though neither hers nor mine. "This pin is special, it was Miriam's lucky charm. She looks at it every day; I see her. It's like a passport. We can use it to get to the beach tomorrow. Just hold it and pray for the weather to clear up."

"I'm not supposed to pray for the weather," I said. "God doesn't care about that."

"I can," Luca said. "I'm Christian, remember."

"Only half," I said.

"For Christ's sake, just do this for me," she said, running her fingers up my arm. I remembered another test she'd given me one day at the beach—I had to close my eyes as she inched her fingertips up the underside of my arm starting at my wrist, and say "Now!" when she reached my elbow crease. As she gave me my instructions, her face was so close to mine I could see her faint lady moustache, and the black hairs inside her nose.

1-888-2-LILITH

"Don't wait too long," she crooned, "but don't wait too short. You have to get it just right."

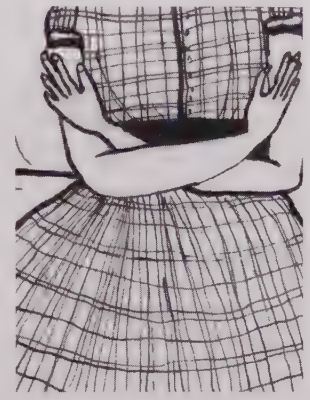
I closed my eyes. I could feel her breath on my cheek. "Now?" I said miserably, already sick at heart; I didn't have a prayer of getting this right.

"Too soon!" she yelled trying not to sound gleeful. "Look, I was that far away"—and she held her thumb and index finger an inch apart.

Now again she pulled me that close again and for a second I thought she might kiss me. But instead she grabbed my hand, the one not holding the pin, and giving it a little twist, like an Indian burn. "Don't," I said, dangerously close to crying.

Her voice turned soft. "Trust me." I looked at her, her eyes so dark I couldn't see where the brown ring melted into the black center.

I opened the door, counting my steps, walking down a long aisle. The church was dark and surprisingly cool, and I thought I heard water dropping into a bucket. With stone and wood everywhere—the pews, statues, altar—I could have been walking in a forest. Though I'd never been in a church before I was afraid to look around. Luca's directions were easy to follow. I placed the pin between the candles and began looking for the matches, counting to a hundred, when I heard swishing footsteps. "Luca?" I whispered.



"What's in your hand, dear?" asked the nun.

It wasn't Luca at all but a woman, a nun, in gray robes. "Can I help you, dear?" she asked.

"My friend," I stammered, "she's coming."

She quietly appraised me in the damp darkness. Three drops of water splashed into the bucket. "I don't think you belong here, dear," she said. "Why don't you come with me?"

The pin! I couldn't leave it there. Blindly I groped for it.

"What's in your hand, dear?" the nun asked. From what I could glimpse of her face, which wasn't much, she didn't look very old, not that much older than Luca.

"Nothing," I said.

"It's most definitely something," she said. She reached for my arm and began trying to pry my fingers open.

"Leave me alone, quit it!" I yelled, but she wouldn't stop. "Luca!" I wailed.

"Come with me," the nun said. She took me by the elbow and we began retracing my route back to the door where Luca was waiting.

"Elizabeth!" the nun said, seeing Luca standing there, drawing her name out for about three minutes, long enough for me to realize I'd never heard Luca's full name spoken aloud. "What in the world is going on?" The nun adopted the tone of a much older woman. For a moment I thought Luca would crack up, but her face was as somber as I'd ever seen it. "This pin is priceless. What is this girl doing with it?"

"It's OK," Luca said. Her eyes narrowed and her voice sounded funny too, deeper, as if she were trying to talk like a man, or without moving her lips. "My mother doesn't mind, she lets me play with it all the time," Luca said.

"I don't think that's true," the nun said.

Luca took another deep breath. "Sharon came over this morning to play and she begged me to show her my mother's jewelry and then she said maybe we can take the pin to get it blessed so it will be sunny tomorrow…"

"That's not true," I said under my breath; no one heard me.

On and on she went, about how I wouldn't take no for an answer. The nun's fingers on my arm gradually relaxed. "You turn right around and return the pin to Luca's mother. Tell her you stole it and you're sorry and promise you'll never steal from her or from anyone ever again. Do you understand me? Elizabeth, you stay here with me."

Luca nodded. Her face began to relax; she stole a look at me for the first time since we were caught, and her smile drew me in. We're safe, her eyes told me: she'd fooled the nun. Go back home, I'll come over as soon as I'm done here, we'll put the pin back, no one will ever know.

It wasn't raining when I left the church. I walked home slowly, as if it were a sunny day after all and Luca and I were at the beach, at Sunken Meadow, strolling together at the water's edge, looking for pearly shells and beach glass. "Oh look," I'd say, bending down to scoop up the beautiful brooch that had been washed up on the shore, lying there in plain sight, waiting for anyone to find. "Look how beautiful it is." We'd turn it this way and that, watching the sun bounce off the facets of the stones. Luca would hold it up to her eye like a kaleidoscope. "I wonder whose it is."

"Finders keepers," Luca would say.

I didn't believe that. If something was yours, it was yours forever, even if someone else found it.

When I reached my building, I slipped the brooch, which I'd been clutching the whole time, into my pants' pocket. Luca would be over soon. She'd mimic the nun's silly tone of voice, and we'd talk about going to the beach tomorrow—by now the sun was poking out."Why do you think it's called Sunken Meadow?" I'd ask her. "It's not a meadow, and it's not sunken."

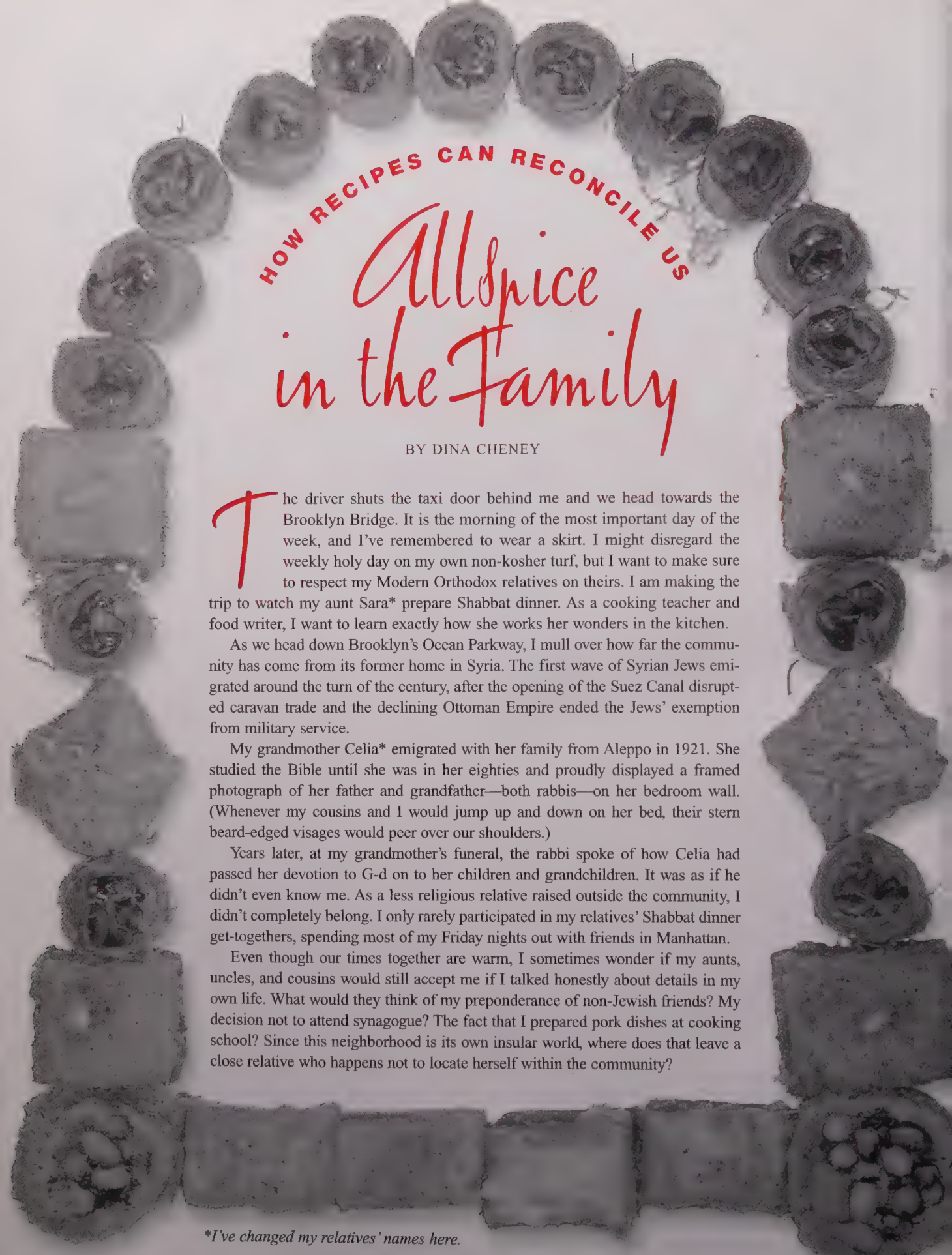
Luca wouldn't know the answer, but she'd make one up. I'd ask her if she could bring her transistor radio so we could listen for more songs of Bob Dylan. "Sure," she'd say. And then she'd ask for the pin back.

"Losers weepers," I'd say.

I wasn't sure what would happen next. She could do anything, I knew that now. She could lunge for me and feel each pocket, she could empty all of my dresser drawers, she could tell my mother the lie she'd told the nun. All I really wanted was to see the split second her eyes narrowed in fear.

As for the pin, I'd give it back to her eventually; I'd have to. But first I'd make her beg. ■

ROBERTA ISRAELOFF's most recent book is *Kindling the Flame: Reflections on Ritual, Faith and Family* (Simon & Schuster). She lives and teaches writing in East Northport, NY.



HOW RECIPES CAN RECONCILE US

Allspice in the Family

BY DINA CHENEY

The driver shuts the taxi door behind me and we head towards the Brooklyn Bridge. It is the morning of the most important day of the week, and I've remembered to wear a skirt. I might disregard the weekly holy day on my own non-kosher turf, but I want to make sure to respect my Modern Orthodox relatives on theirs. I am making the trip to watch my aunt Sara* prepare Shabbat dinner. As a cooking teacher and food writer, I want to learn exactly how she works her wonders in the kitchen.

As we head down Brooklyn's Ocean Parkway, I mull over how far the community has come from its former home in Syria. The first wave of Syrian Jews emigrated around the turn of the century, after the opening of the Suez Canal disrupted caravan trade and the declining Ottoman Empire ended the Jews' exemption from military service.

My grandmother Celia* emigrated with her family from Aleppo in 1921. She studied the Bible until she was in her eighties and proudly displayed a framed photograph of her father and grandfather—both rabbis—on her bedroom wall. (Whenever my cousins and I would jump up and down on her bed, their stern beard-edged visages would peer over our shoulders.)

Years later, at my grandmother's funeral, the rabbi spoke of how Celia had passed her devotion to G-d on to her children and grandchildren. It was as if he didn't even know me. As a less religious relative raised outside the community, I didn't completely belong. I only rarely participated in my relatives' Shabbat dinner get-togethers, spending most of my Friday nights out with friends in Manhattan.

Even though our times together are warm, I sometimes wonder if my aunts, uncles, and cousins would still accept me if I talked honestly about details in my own life. What would they think of my preponderance of non-Jewish friends? My decision not to attend synagogue? The fact that I prepared pork dishes at cooking school? Since this neighborhood is its own insular world, where does that leave a close relative who happens not to locate herself within the community?

**I've changed my relatives' names here.*

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It's not as if I am completely detached from their way of life. If there was one thing in Celia's eulogy that *did* resonate with me, it was the countless references to her culinary skills. Once the subject turned to her cooking, I felt more comfortable. Not only did I share with my grandmother a love of the kitchen, I also remembered her cooking as much as any of my Brooklyn cousins, aunts or uncles did. I'd always been in awe of Celia's magic hands and discerning palate, as well as the results they yielded. For years, my cousins and I would raid her refrigerator—chock-full of Syrian sweets—at every family event. She always had a plentiful supply of difficult-to-make *graybeh*—melt-in-your-mouth butter cookies, each embedded with a single gemlike pistachio—and *kanafe*, those crispy, hair-like pastries filled with sweetened ricotta cheese and drenched in rosewater syrup.

After a night of pastry consumption, Grandma would test our endurance with her traditional breakfast delicacies. At the marble-topped table in her antique kitchen, we would feast on her homemade *ka'ak*. As if the addictive sesame-sprinkled anise crackers weren't enough, Grandma would also offer *sambousak*, pillows of semolina dough filled with Muenster cheese. I was so proud of her ka'ak that I would bring them to school in Maryland for my own version of 'show and tell,' removing them from my bag slowly and mysteriously, as if I were performing a wizard's trick. I was thrilled to share the crumbly crackers with my friends, who didn't quite know what to make of their strong licorice flavor.

The homes of the Syrian Jewish community would also have seemed "foreign" to my friends. On postage stamp-sized lots, these houses are variations on a theme of Spanish tile roofs and intricate ironwork. In contrast to the elaborate houses, though, most lives in the community are plainly laid out. Men typically work in business and pray at one of the community's many synagogues. By their early twenties, most women are married—usually to other Syrians. When my father married my non-Sephardic mother and left Brooklyn for Washington, D.C., he distanced himself from the community—a point that has caused him much distress over the years. My father misses the warmth and close ties of his childhood and frequently dreams of returning to New York to be among his family. With her Russian Jewish ancestry, my mother would not fit in nearly as well. As their offspring, I am something of a mixed breed—half in and half out.

I lead a very different life than my 100-percent-Syrian relatives. In line with women in the community, I *did* marry at 22; however, I attended Columbia University and I've focused on my education and career, rather than immediately raising a family in a religious tradition. As a result, even though my cousin Rachel* and I share a love of learning, religion sometimes comes between us. Recently, she had to withdraw a Friday night dinner invitation, as it would have required my husband and me to drive on Shabbat. "You must think I'm a religious fanatic," she exclaimed, sounding deeply embarrassed. "Do you think I'm a terrible person?" I tried to reassure her that I understood her predicament, but Rachel was still apologetic, given her strong instincts as a gracious hostess.

If there's one belief that Rachel never feels the need to explain, it's the cardinal rule of the community:

Syrian-Style Meatballs with Cherries

DINA CHENEY

Meatballs:

1 lb. ground beef
2 Tb. finely ground oatmeal
2 Tb. water
1 Tb. Canola or vegetable oil
1 egg yolk
1/2 tsp. allspice
1/2 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. fresh-ground black pepper
1 tsp. coarse or kosher salt
3 Tb. Canola oil for frying

Sauce:

1-1/2 or 2 large Spanish or sweet onions, chopped
1/2 tsp. coarse or kosher salt, divided
2 cans dark, sweet, pitted cherries
3 Tb. tamarind concentrate*

** Can be purchased at most Middle Eastern or Asian groceries.*

you must marry Jewish. When I was a junior in college, she warned me, in between bites of Syrian pastry, that I must date only Jewish boys. "If you don't," she said, leaning close, "you're playing with fire." Falling in love with my Jewish husband was in some ways a miracle, a boon for family unity. I'd passed the most important test by remaining within my tribe.

Interrupting my reverie, the driver pulls up to my aunt Sara's house. It is here, in this brick home on one of the community's tree-lined streets, that magic regularly occurs: my aunt, through her cooking, helps to bridge the gap between my relatives and me. Though I didn't grow up with my cousins and I barely see them, we all share a connection with the dishes of our heritage: the allspice-spiked meatballs coupled with brown onions and sweet, dark cherries and, after dairy meals, the rose- and orange-scented *suttlage* (cornstarch milk pudding).

My relatives and I often laugh over the name that I coined for peas that have been cooked for hours with meat and spices: "dirty." My love of this dish, in which the peas become brown and mushy and full of sweet, mysterious flavors, established early on that I was a devoted fan of their cuisine. Now that I cook, I can share with my female relatives an intimate knowledge of the kitchen. In some ways, I reflect, I am another link in the family chain of good cooks, carrying on my grandmother's passion, though adapted a bit to the modern and non-kosher palate.

Yet, despite my desire to learn how to cook Syrian food à la Celia and Sara, I've always been concerned that it might be too labor-intensive. Just to create some of the ingredients—tamarind paste, for example—seemed to me to take a whole day of stirring, watching, straining. Joseph Sutton, in *Magic Carpet: Aleppo-in-Flatbush*, describes how the Jewish women of Syria were quasi-invisible, home almost all of the time cooking. Much as I love dirty peas, I am definitely not interested in becoming an invisible woman.

Trying to keep an open mind, I follow my aunt into the familiar terrain of her kitchen. She has already laid out the makings of our first dish: eggplant with meat and rice. And so the lesson begins, as my aunt—a woman who cooks by instinct and rarely follows a recipe—teaches me to use lots of allspice, cinnamon and tamarind, much more spice than I had expected. I learn to freeze meatballs and broiled eggplant slices, an indispensable timesaving trick. She also shows me that many of the dishes don't have to take the hours I had feared. The heat does its work, while the women relax. Sara's motto is "Cook it until it's dead, until it looks brown and limp."

Once my aunt and I have finished cooking, she brings out a box of index cards. When I open it, I realize that it contains a little bit of our family's history. Each card represents a meal that Sara has prepared, with a list of guest names and dishes that have been served. While I'm fingering the cards, I come across one that reads "Dinner for Dina, 11/96."

I remember how my aunt allowed me to choose the menu for one Friday night dinner. After I called her with my selections, Sara prepared exactly what I requested. The dirty peas were browner and sweeter than ever, permeated to the core with the aroma of allspice. The meatballs with cherries, full of browned onions and the tart note of tamarind, struck the perfect balance between savory and sweet. As I relish the memory of that meal, I realize that I am written into my family's history. I am inside this box of cards. I *do* belong.

Carefully closing the box, I wait with my aunt for the evening's guests, my family. ■

DINA CHENEY, a freelance writer and recipe developer, teaches cooking and offers guided tastings and flavor-based creativity and team-building seminars through her company, Cooking by Heart (www.cookingbyheart.com).

Syrian-Style Meatballs with Cherries

Serves 4

- Combine meatball ingredients and form into balls about 1 inch in diameter. Refrigerate for at least 15 minutes.
- Preheat oil over medium-high heat in a large skillet. When hot but not smoking, add the meatballs and sauté in 2 batches until brown but not cooked through, about 2 minutes per side. Remove from the pan, reserving on a plate.
- Add onions and 1/4 tsp. salt and sauté over medium-high heat until soft and golden brown, about 7 minutes.
- Add cherries and their juices, tamarind, and another 1/4 tsp. salt to taste and bring to a boil.
- Reduce to a simmer and immediately add the meatballs and their juices. Cover and simmer for about 2 1/2 hours. The sauce should taste meaty and sweet, but with a subtle tang.
- Before serving, transfer the meatballs to a plate and boil the sauce until reduced by about half. Serve the meatballs with the sauce over white rice.

1-888-2-LILITH

The Grandmother in the Mental Hospital

BY CARYN MIRRIAM-GOLDBERG

—for Molly Prusak

She used to hide things: pliers
in the refrigerator, a roll of stamps
behind the canister of flour.
This drove my father crazy
but I liked it: opening drawers
and seeing things you never expected together.
Now she lies on the narrow bed
while the baby pushes her wheelchair.
Let him, she says, staring
at her quiet lamp. I tell her
about his new sneakers and the weather
until she waves to me to be quiet.
I don't like how her room faces
another building. And all the pills
that don't work, that never have,

and I don't like how my father, 25 years ago,
would gladly hold open the door of the Buick
to drive her here so she could sign in
the crooked letters of her name and cry
when they said more shock therapy was a good idea.
"I'm going to die," she says,
but she has always said that.
Always, stories of potato fields
where her good brothers and sister
should have been buried instead of in mass graves;
the way we ate too much
or too little, the lost son, the too-small
apartment, the stupid neighbors, the bad weather
and what they did to her mother in Poland
She sits up and falls into me.
"I never thought it would be like this,"
but how else could it be?
She sits up and lets me hold her, takes my hand
that two months from now will take the shovel
from my mother to push another clump of dirt
into her grave where all the crazy things,
finally quiet, fall together

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CARYN MIRRIAM-GOLDBERG directs the Transformative Language Arts program at Goddard College and facilitates writing workshops. Her poems have been published in more than 60 literary magazines. Her most recent books are *Lot's Wife* and *Write Where You Are*.

e s p i o n a g e

Spies, Terrorist Hunters, and an Uneasy Reporter Try to Decode the Middle East

BY KAREN PROPP

The female spy has long been cast in the role of trickster seductress. Think Delilah, 1100 B.C.E. Think La Femme Nikita in skimpy black leather, circa 2003.

In ***Female Intelligence: Women and Espionage in the First World War*** (New York University Press, $26.96), **Tammy M. Proctor** argues that the sexy, temptress spy taps into larger societal fears that accompany shifts in gender roles and the rise of female power. When the iconic figure Mata Hari was executed in 1917, it was on the basis of very circumstantial evidence. In Proctor's view, Mata Hari's real threat to male authorities was her independence as a divorcée and self-defined success as a dancer. Indeed, spying, like ambulance driving, nursing, or munitions factory work in wartime, offered alternatives to women who wished to escape their confining domestic roles.

Proctor's larger project is to uncover the unknown history of women in intelligence (over 6000, in her estimate) who worked for the British during World War I. Regrettably, Proctor's book reads like a reworked dissertation. She omits Zionist Sarah Aaronsohn, a member of the NILI spy ring who spied on the Turkish rulers of Palestine. Aaronsohn was captured by the Turks and tortured for four days, eventually committing suicide to avoid confession. Zionists later cited NILI activities as part of the service to Britain that earned them the right to a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

Looking at a much earlier book, we meet another Jewish woman spy, Shula Cohen, the heroine of ***Shula: Code Name Pearl*** (by **Aviezer Goland & Danny Pinkas**, Delacorte Press, 1980), for whom spying also offered an escape from a claustrophobic domestic life. Born in Jerusalem, Shula was married at 17 to a wealthy Beirut merchant and raised seven children. In 1947, on the eve of Israel's War of Independence, she stumbled on military intelligence and sent it on to Israel. Immediately, the nascent intelligence services tapped her to smuggle Jewish refugees from Syria across the Lebanese border. In the 1950s, she organized a spy ring based in a Beirut nightclub, and obtained for the Mossad secret Lebanese and Syrian documents. Dubbed "The Mata Hari of the Middle East," when she was arrested and convicted by the Lebanese government in the late 1950s, Shula spent seven years in prison, and was released in 1967, following the Six Day War as part of a prisoner's exchange. Returning to Jerusalem, she settled into the innocuous role of a manager of an antique shop near the King David Hotel. As told by Golan and Pinkas, her story is rich in texture and page-turning power—and yes, even spy romance.

In contrast, ***The Terrorist Hunter: The Extraordinary Story of a Woman Who Went Undercover to Infiltrate the Radical Islamic Groups Operating in America*** (HarperCollins, $25.95), whose author, like Shula, witnessed first hand the effects of terrorism on her own family, reads like a scandalous spy memoir. The author is listed as **Anonymous**, an Iraqi-born Jew married to an Israeli and now living in the United States. A mother of four, she found her true calling when she responded to a help-wanted ad placed by a Middle East research institute. On the job, she discovered documents that made her suspect certain Muslim charities as fronts for Hamas. Soon she was attending rallies and conferences of Islamic radicals, where she wore a burqa to hide both her identity and a tape recorder. At once enacting traditional and nontraditional female roles, Anonymous gives us the striking image of a woman eight months pregnant who conceals recording equipment under her enormous belly! Anonymous later outed as **Rita Katz**, whose father was one of nine Jewish men hanged in Baghdad in 1980, is currently the director of SITE (The Search for International Terrorist Entities, www.siteinstitute.org).

1-888-2-LILITH

Jessica Stern, faculty member at Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government, distinguished terrorism expert, and author of ***Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*** (HarperCollins, $27.95), is not exactly a proper spy. Yet research for her highly readable book led Stern to dangerous places and dangerous people, who typically assumed she was working for the CIA or a similar organization. For four years, often dressed in long sleeves, long skirts, and a head scarf, and armed only with a supply of Harvard pens for gifts, she interviewed extremist Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Although the information she uncovers from her travels to Pakistan, Gaza, Israel, and Texas is undoubtedly valuable, Stern's real intelligence lies in the sleuthing she does into terrorists' minds and motives. Stern paints a frightening picture of the Muslim world's hatred of the West and its threat of future terrorist attacks. She does not call for military solutions—American violence inevitably assists terrorists in mobilizing recruits, she says—but for First World nations to study the psychological, spiritual, and material vulnerabilities in the Islamic world. Cultural intelligence, says Stern, can help covertly dismantle powerful terrorist networks. And it can sow dissent among a Muslim population that is vulnerable to the fervor of religious extremist leaders who promise clear solutions to poverty, alienation, and humiliation.

Like Stern, **Amira Hass** is aware of being deeply involved in an historical process, and this makes her work equally compelling. Hass, a Jewish Israeli journalist frequently reviled for her work, has lived and reported from the Palestinian territories since 1993, when she moved to Gaza to report for Ha'aretz. Her book, ***Reporting from Ramallah: An Israeli Journalist in an Occupied Land,*** edited and translated by **Rachel Leah Jones**, (MIT Press, $14.95), is a compilation of gritty columns published from 1997-2002 that hold up a mirror to both Israeli and Palestinian societies. She describes roadblocks, destroyed buildings, curfews, and the misery of Palestinian life, weaving her "intelligence" from Israeli soldiers, Palestinian ex-prisoners, people in refugee camps, restaurant owners, teenagers, and bereaved families. It is painful reading for ordinary Israelis and supporters of Israel.

Hass provocatively links her work to her mother's experience on a transport to Bergen-Belsen. Her mother recounted how the sick and doomed Jewish women on the train received only cold, dispassionate stares from the German women who saw them. This story made Hass dread being a mere silent bystander, and nurtures her intense needs to know and tell. Her telling has made many Israelis brand her a traitor, but it has also won her supporters in Israel, as well as the UNESCO Guillermo Camo World Press Freedom Prize for 2003. ■

KAREN PROPP is the author of two memoirs, *In Sickness & In Health: A Love Story* and *The Pregnancy Project: Encounters with Reproductie Therapy*. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

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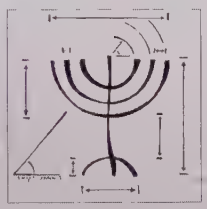
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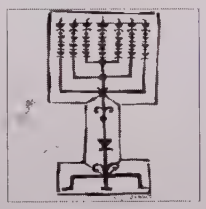
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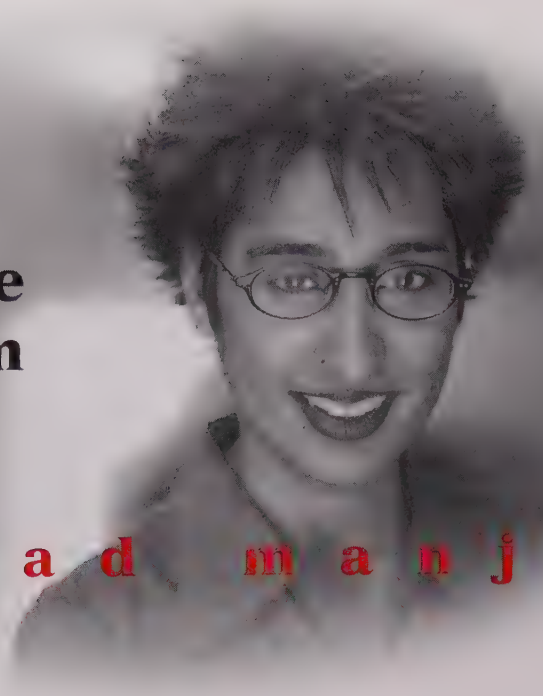
The Trouble With Islam



MARK BARTKIW

irshad manji

You may wonder who I am to talk to you this way. I am a Muslim Refusenik. That doesn't mean I refuse to be a Muslim; it simply means I refuse to join an army of automatons in the name of Allah. I take this phrase from the original refuseniks—Soviet Jews who championed religious and personal freedom. Their communist masters refused to let them emigrate to Israel. For their attempts to leave the Soviet Union, many refuseniks paid with hard labor and, sometimes, with their lives. Over time, though, their persistent refusal to comply with the mechanisms of mind control and soullessness helped end a totalitarian system.

❖ ❖ ❖

You know what happened after the show [about gay and lesbian Muslims] aired? Of all the complaints I got from Toronto-area Muslims the most common was that these homosexual "pigs" and "dogs" who I had featured must have been—brace yourself—Jews. Never mind the heinous video of Iranian stoning practices, or Anan's willingness to accept a theological thumbs-down about his sexuality, or the religious advisor's call for God-conscious humility on everyone's part. None of it registered with the incensed Muslims who wrote and phoned in. Only one thing scanned—that gays and lesbians couldn't possibly be part of "us." Homosexuals are manifestly moles for "them." This, from the bosom of a twenty-first-century cosmopolis.

I was nauseated. Whatever the culture in which Muslims lived, be it rural or digital, and whatever the generations, whether symbolized by a 1970's mosque for immigrants or by a media-connected city for the new millennium, Islam emerged as desperately tribal. Did we ever need a reformation.

But what did that mean—a "reformation"? Truthfully, I had only the sketchiest idea. What I knew was that believers in the historically "reformed" religions don't operate on a herd mentality nearly as much as Muslims do. Christian leaders are aware of the intellectual diversity within their ranks. While each can deny the validity of other interpretations—and many do—none can deny that a plethora of interpretations exists. As for Jews, they're way ahead of the crowd. Jews actually publicize disagreements by surrounding their scriptures with commentaries and incorporating debates into the Talmud itself. By contrast, most Muslims treat the Koran as a document to imitate rather than interpret, suffocating our capacity to think for ourselves

❖ ❖ ❖

In trying to answer how I reconcile my Muslim faith with the barbaric lashing of a rape victim, I concluded that I couldn't reconcile them with breezy confidence. I couldn't glibly say, as I've heard so many Muslim feminists do, that the Koran itself guarantees justice. I couldn't cavalierly shrug that those whacko Nigerian jurists who apply Sharia law have sodomized my transparently egalitarian religion. The Koran is not transparently egalitarian for women. It's not transparently anything except enigmatic. With apologies to Noam Chomsky, it's Muslims who manufacture consent in Allah's name. The decisions we make on the basis of the Koran aren't dictated by God: we make them of our free human will.

❖ ❖ ❖

A few weeks before September 11, I joined a panel of Muslims on national TV to "discuss images of the Islamic world." Taking this politely worded invitation as a euphemism for "let's complain about the West," my fellow panelists indulged in the usual castigating of North American pop culture: Hollywood casts us all as fanatics, the fanatics always look swarthy, and every other standard line in the victim's canon.

Continued on page 45

1-888-2-LILITH

Photograph in Krakow

BY ELAINE ZIMMERMAN

She walks straight ahead.
A scarf covers her hair.
The chin angular, eyes large.
Her hands push a carriage.
You cannot see the baby,
but a child is resting.
Others walk before and behind her.
The clothes are brown or black.
She stands out.

She could be walking
to the bookstore or fruit market.
Who is she trying to fool?
Is the pace to confuse the child,
let her sleep a few more hours with
dreams of angels and sugar candy?
Or is she saying names of the living
to trick God into saving her?
This has sometimes worked for others.

Most look down.
She looks straight ahead.
Perhaps she sees someone she knows.
Someone must be ahead of her
but it does not appear so or maybe
a voice guides her to a different room.
She prays with her eyes open.

There will be no covered mirrors.
Water will not be spilled in every room
where death has dipped his dagger.
No one will walk a different path home
from the Vistula to keep death from returning.
There is only one path for now.

She will leave behind one ring and
a pair of brown shoes. Nothing else.
No one will close her eyes or
walk with her when she dies.
I close her eyes now but do not know
her name. It is never too late to honor
the dead or pray for the living.

ELAINE ZIMMERMAN writes poetry, prose and social policy. This poem received Honorable Mention and a Certificate of Merit in Israel from the Miriam Lindberg Poetry Peace Prize. A psychotherapist, she is Executive Director of the Connecticut Commission on Children. Her article "Brave Enough to Be Kind" has become the state policy text to develop anti-bully law for Connecticut.

Between Gender & Nation

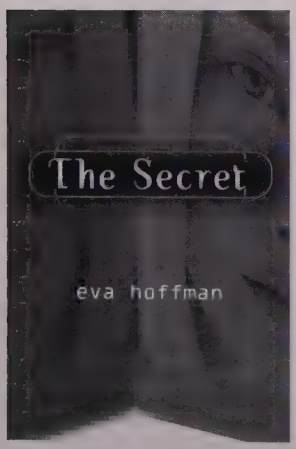
Women's bodies—symbols of modernity and progress.

Sheila Katz's ambitious project, ***Women and Gender in Early Jewish and Palestinian Nationalism*** (University Press of Florida, $55), attempts to address the roles of and attitudes toward women in the opening decades of the Jewish and Palestinian nationalist movements (pre-1948). She claims that early nationalist discourses were highly gendered, contributing both to the creation of national communities and to the bloody modern conflict between them.

Both Jewish and Palestinian nationalisms, Katz argues, were bound up in images of masculinity that excluded or marginalized women. For the Zionists, nationalism provided an opportunity to regain a masculinity "lost" in exile; she quotes Max Nordau's 1898 address when he predicted that the "new muscle-Jews [would] surpass their [Hellenistic] ancestors" and thus escape the weakness of Galut—exile—a concept consistently coded as both passive and feminine. French Zionist Bernard Lazare wrote that a Jew declaring his nationalist fervor translates as "I want to be a man fully free…." In parallel form, she quotes Abd al-Rahim Mahmud, a Mandate-era Palestinian poet: "I will guard my land with my sword so that all will know that I am a man!" Land was bound up with a fear of emasculation; the struggles for nationhood and eventually statehood were the ultimate declaration of manhood, a declaration that left women on the rhetorical sidelines. The land was the metaphorical feminine receiver of male nationalism's bounty. Numerous Palestinian poets evoke Palestine as a woman in need of protection as well as adoration; many Zionist sources discuss the marriage of the (masculinized) Jewish people to the (feminized) land in order to complete the Jews and to fulfill the land. Both nationalist discourses refer to the barrenness of the (female) land and the need for the blood and sweat of the working (men) to fertilize it; they also overlap in references to the land as both mother and female lover. As Katz points out, this language necessarily excludes women, who would not be expected to become the land's lesbian lovers. Katz weaves together both national accounts to form a coherent narrative, describing the symbolic role of women's liberation for the different camps, and showing how women's bodies, education, and customs were viewed as symbols of modernity and progress. Whether as representations of fundamental cultural/ethnic/national differences or as examples of the way that the "enemy" treated the other side, women were constantly the sites of nationalist rhetorical jousting.

Although interesting and valuable in parts, Katz's analysis often seems painfully naïve for an historian of the conflict. It would be disingenuous to imagine that Zionism or Palestinian nationalism could provide a liberation for women that had occurred neither before nationalism nor within the scope of any other nationalist movement. Throughout the history of nationalist movements, women have felt torn between solidarity with other women and pressure to remain aligned with their own race, nation, or ethnicity.

—ZINAIDA MILLER



When Mother and Daughter Are Too, Too Close

The Secret (Public Affairs, $25.00), **Eva Hoffman's** long-awaited first novel, marks a radical departure from Hoffman's previous works of memoir and historical non-fiction, in which she explores her life as an uprooted Polish Jewish refugee in North America. This book is a tale that blends sci-fi with the story of a young girl's coming of age, set in the not so distant, hyper-virtual future. Iris Surrey believes she is an ordinary girl growing up with her affluent mother in a Midwestern college town. They share an almost telepathic connection, and Iris senses that their physical likeness is also unusual. They are like sisters, "identical twins who by some fluke were aging at different speeds." Despite their closeness, Iris does not know simple facts about her background. And when she starts to search for clues, she discovers the unthinkable. Iris is a clone, a product of genetic engineering, created at a commercial laboratory from a sampling of her mother's DNA.

Iris begins to see herself as inhuman, a soulless monstrosity because she is a "genetic copy." Iris's identity crisis may seem like a science fiction fairy tale, but the existential predicaments she faces while trying to carve out her own unique existence can feel familiar to us all. This is a psychological story exploring the nature of subjectivity in the twenty-first century. Hoffman creates an eerie picture of a future society, where tinkering with life has become a part of consumer culture.

—DEBORAH OSMOND

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She's a Shadow in Her Own Biography

No one alive has ever seen Hannah Rochel Verbermacher. She left no writing behind, and historians aren't even sure where she is buried. Writing her biography should be a nearly impossible task. But not for **Nathaniel Deutsch**, whose new book, ***The Maiden of Ludmir: A Jewish Holy Woman and Her World*** (University of California Press, $34.95) chronicles her rise to legendary status as the only female rebbe in Hasidic history.

Before she was the Maiden, Hannah was an only child, born in Ludmir, a 19th-century cultural mecca, if only a speck on the Ukrainian map. Studious and devoutly religious, she received a "male" education and became a local legend by age 12. She didn't stop there: after experiencing an ecstatic vision at her mother's tomb, Hannah called off her impending wedding in favor of a life of prayer and study. She built her own study house and attracted a crowd of followers—mostly working-class women—who revered her teachings and believed she could heal the sick.

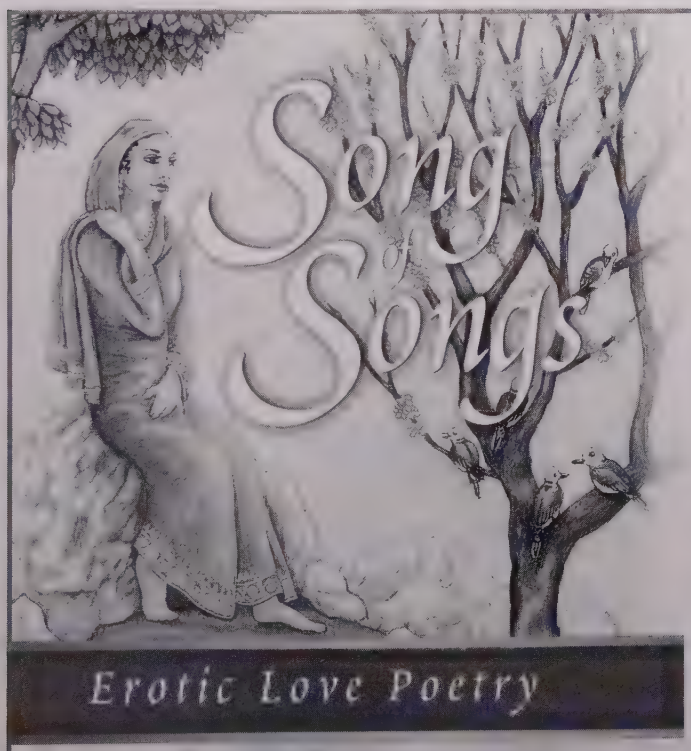
As the Maiden's fame grew, so did the threat she posed to the male Hasidic dynasty. Local leaders began pressuring her to renounce her controversial lifestyle. Finally, at 50, she left Ludmir for Palestine, where she lived the rest of her days.

Little more is known about the Maiden of Ludmir. Since Deutsch stands on shaky biographical ground, he builds his memorial out of theory. He explores the history of Ludmir itself, analogies between the Maiden and female Christian saints, and her much disputed gender identity. Most importantly, he keeps the reader from celebrating her as an early feminist or, equally dangerous, a Hasidic poster child, describing her instead as the enigma she is.

And with good reason. Sadly, the Maiden is no more than a shadow in her own biography. As much as the book reveals about her, Deutsch's biography also reveals how much pre-Holocaust Jewish history, especially women's history, has simply been erased—or uprooted. Deutsch describes his own trip to Ludmir, now a depressed post-Soviet suburb. Even the Jewish cemetery has been destroyed, its tombstones now cobblestones, paving the path away from the town's desolation.

—MIRIAM FELTON-DANSKY

As her fame grew, so did the threat she posed to the male Hasidic dynasty.



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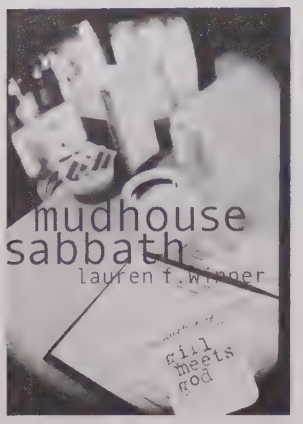
Leaving Judaism



That *Mudhouse Sabbath* (Paraclete Press, $13.95) is published by a Christian press and addressed largely to a Christian audience only makes it more curious, for in many ways it is a "Jewish" book. Author **Lauren F. Winner**, who grew up Jewish and practiced Orthodox Judaism in college, converted to Christianity seven years ago. As she puts it, this is "...a book about those things I miss."

Each of the eleven chapters details ways in which Jews practice their religion. From the opening "shabbat/sabbath," in which the author finds herself contemplating the meaning of Shabbat at a coffee shop in Charlottesville, to "mezuzot/doorposts," Winner explores how to transpose the spiritual lessons behind these Jewish practices into her new faith. *Mudhouse Sabbath* is told with a deft blend of warmth, humor, candor and a good deal of scholarly research. However much you may think you know about Jewish practices, there is much to be learned from Winner's own personal take on themes from hospitality to candle lighting to aging. One of the book's biggest draws is that it is written by someone deeply familiar with both the Jewish and the Christian faiths, who is able to interpret and explain these two worlds to one another. In one chapter, for example, she illuminates the connection between body image, Christianity's separation of the body from the soul, Judaism's linkage of eating and other bodily functions to a religious practice, and, finally, her mother's battle with cancer.

In a time of increasing polarity, when differences between people are often perceived as mutual assaults, it is pleasurable to read a book in which the goal is not to proselytize, but to share, inform and perhaps, in the end, to enrich one another.

—ANGELA HIMSEL

Women's Challenges in Israeli Life

Until Vicky Knafo demonstrated in front of the Knesset last year to protest cuts in benefits to single mothers, women had been almost entirely absent from recent discussions about the political and economic crises in Israel. Two recent books portray Israeli women's achievements and struggles in

"Dazzling—beautifully written, fascinating to read, and unpredictable."
—Riv-Ellen Prell, author of *Fighting to Become Americans: Jews, Gender and the Anxiety of Assimilation*

This superbly crafted book offers intimate stories from Hasidic teenagers' lives, providing an intriguing twist to a universal theme: the struggle to grow up and define who we are within the context of culture, family, and life-driving beliefs.

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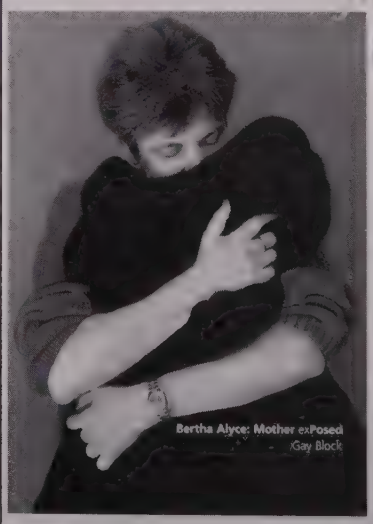

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recent years. ***Jewish Feminism in Israel: Some Contemporary Perspectives,*** edited by **Kaplana Misra** and **Melanie S. Rich** (Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, $24.95), describes many of the unique aspects of Israeli society, and their impact on women. The kibbutz experience, the politicization of religion, militarization and peace movements, violence against women, and new feminist Israeli art are all discussed in this collection.

Marcia Friedman, one of the first self-identified Israeli feminists, surveys Israeli Jewish feminism at the end of the twentieth century. Not until the mid-1990s did Israeli feminism expand to include the concerns of Mizrachi, Arab, Ethiopian, and Russian-born women. In another chapter, Mizrachi scholar and activist Henriette Dahan-Kalev observes that Mizrachi feminists, like North American black feminists, need to address two issues simultaneously—their oppression as women in a patriarchal Israeli society, and their subordinate ethnic status in Israel's Ashkenazi-dominated culture. Gila Svirsky, one of the founders of Women in Black, gives a history of this group, the largest and most visible of the women's peace movements in Israel, as well as the context for its creation amid other mixed-gender Israeli peace groups and Israel's militarized society. Irit Umanit links domestic violence with Israel's culture of siege and military preparedness.

These and other provocative issues are reflected in new feminist art in Israel. Curator Tami Katz Freiman presents a visually arresting chapter which features images from an exhibit she organized in 1994, titled "Meta-Sex 94: Identity, Body, and Sexuality." According to Katz Freiman, these feminist artists challenge the Zionist ideology of the "right body" (healthy, male, fighting, macho) with images that "reflect the feminist discourse of the body's deconstruction."

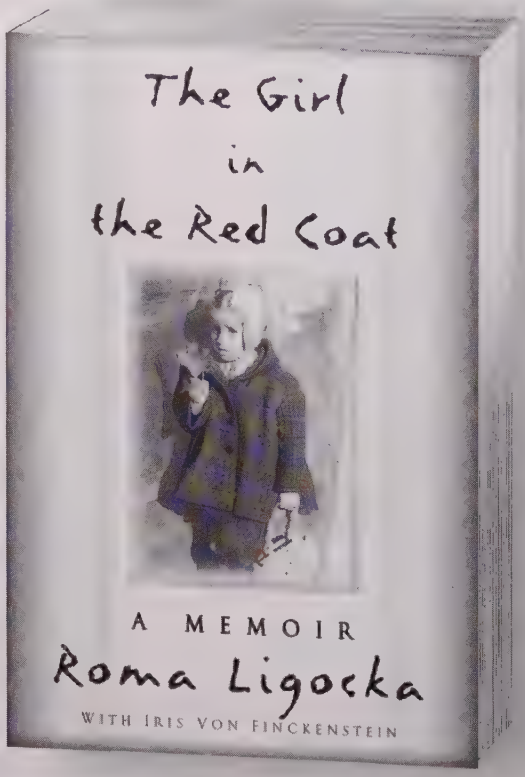
Portraits in Passion: Vision and Values of American-Israeli Women, by **Anita I. Jacobs** with **Miriam K. Landau** (1st Books Library, $10.50; also available as an E-book: see www.1stbooks.com) originated as a project the author undertook while spending a year in Israel as a Melton Senior Educator Fellow at Hebrew University. Jacobs profiles 21 American-born women who immigrated to Israel. Many made aliya in midlife, after they had established families, careers, and other commitments in the United States. Entrepreneurs, cantors, educators, musicians, political activists, marriage educators, and broadcasters are among the women who inspired Jacobs in this book. Yet despite their accomplishments, there's a certain flatness to their narratives. And though these women are all native English speakers, their words often sound stilted, evoking a poor translation from Hebrew, as when one teacher explains, "The school is now producing kids that society decides are needed." It's a shame, because these women's stories *are* inspirational and should be in an appealing format.

In this difficult time in the Middle East, these two volumes demonstrate Israeli women's resilience, creativity, and determination to change their realities and the limitations which hem them in.

—SUSAN SAPIRO

INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

"A story of one woman's quest for contentment."*



At a Krakow screening of *Schindler's List,* Roma Ligocka recognized herself as the film's girl in the red coat. Now she reexamines the fifty-year aftermath of surviving the Holocaust. From her terrifying days in war-torn Poland through the Communist occupation, from her long quest for artistic freedom through the joys and hardships of marriage and motherhood, Ligocka offers a courageous memoir of tragedy and triumph.

"This poignant, well-told tale does honor to all children bewildered by horror and injustice."
—Thomas Keneally, author of *Schindler's List*

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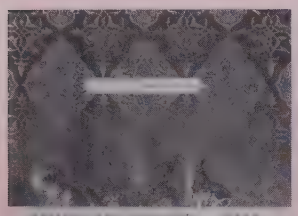
Female and Jewish in Iran—Three Views



When **Farideh Goldin** was 15, a schoolgirl in Iran in 1968, her father made a fire and burned all her books; his goal was to keep her "naive," and thus desirable for marriage. Her own parents had been married when her father was 23, her mother a mere 13 and not yet menstruating. (Goldin tells us that in her community, there was extra status in marrying a girl before she hit puberty.) Farideh was their first child, born when her mother was 15. "I never asked …about their first night together," she writes. "I do, however, know what my great uncle Agha-jaan once said of his child-bride. She wouldn't let him touch her. Although she had obediently agreed to the marriage, she screamed and wept on their wedding night ….He beat her up. She still resisted him. He forced himself on her. 'She eventually came to understand my needs. She became a good wife,' he said."

Goldin's memoir, ***Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman*** (Brandeis University Press/University Press of New

The Morning After

Farideh Goldin's "Wedding Song: Memoirs of an Iranian Jewish Woman," is a narrative of women's abuse in Iran from her grandmother's generation to her own: marrying prepubescent girls off against their will, shunning the mentstruating woman, publicly checking a bride's virginity. During college, Goldin broke with her community and fled to America. Now, in writing this book, she has broken with them once again. LILITH asked her to reflect on the larger context of this mistreatment, missing from her poignant memoir, and on her past—and her very different present.

Q: Did Jews in all classes and from all regions inspect their brides' virginity on their wedding nights?

A: Most that I knew of, both Jews and Moslems. It was not always so public. By the time I left, many women who were more educated or from higher social status went to a gynecologist to get a certificate. Also some women who had sex outside marriage had themselves fixed by a surgeon. And then there were the very few who didn't care.

Q: Has life in the West affected how you see your past?

A: I think my return to school, and especially my field [of] women's studies, helped me to….realize that I had to accept it—the good and the bad. I think we did a lot of these things to have a measure of control over our lives when we were being oppressed by outside-forces. I think the entire ritual of controlling women—and most of it was done by women themselves—was to show a bit of authority when these same people were powerless otherwise.

Q: I imagine that this book would necessarily bother, infuriate even, some members of your family and community. How much did that weigh on you? And how have they handled it?

A: For me to have kept all these as a big secret, as I did for so many years, would have buried all those women who went through it. It was killing me slowly from within. I know most Iranian Jews in this country will be embarrassed by the content of the book, thinking it scandalous even, but to me it is the recording of the lives of our mothers and grandmothers and women before them. They had unbelievable courage to have lived through similar events or worse. My extended family so far is not handling it well. They are taking it very personally. I am especially sad that I have hurt my father. I think he did the best he could under the circumstances. It is hard to defy cultural standards and rules. He is a very smart man and a very courageous man—and now a wounded man as well.

—S.B.

England, $24.95), is filled with such shock and horror, a laundry list of humiliations suffered by women in the Iranian Jewish community she grew up in: Public examination of a bride's vagina to make sure she was a virgin; public ceremonies to remove all body hair on a bride-to-be; girls thrown out of school as soon as their engagements were announced. The driving narrative of the book is the author's own successful attempt to avoid such a fate. Her first marriage proposal comes when she is 12, at a viewing of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang." Her mother protected her from the offer,

Her first marriage proposal came when she was 12. Her mother protected her from the offer.

and some years later she fled, just as she was finishing college, to the United States.

While Goldin's catalogue of humiliations is stunningly long, she doesn't do much to answer the larger questions her experiences raise: How pervasive was this behavior in the Jewish community of Iran, or among their Muslim neighbors? What was her family's socioeconomic class, and how typical was this treatment of women in their cohort, and among other classes of Jews? How many of them filtered into the Iranian-American Jewish communities? The reader is left both horrified and mystified by her story, unnerved by the grotesque mores, and yet unsure of what to make of them.

Dorit Rabinyan's first book, ***Persian Brides***, was magical. The novel was also a huge success for the 21-year-old writer, widely praised and translated into ten languages. What made ***Persian Brides*** special was only partly its story of Iranian women's lives in a Jewish ghetto a hundred years ago. It was also the unique imagination with which she wrote it, rich with hallucinatory images and folk superstition and wisdom.

Rabinyan's second book, ***Strand of a Thousand Pearls*** (Random House, $23.95), translated from the Hebrew by Yael Lotan, contains many of those elements as well. At its center is Iran Azizyan, a Persian mother in Israel, struggling under the weight of her own miseries and terrors, overwrought with the burden of protecting her five children from fate and from themselves. Iran's soul, writes Rabinyan introducing the character, was running down like candles: "Her heart dripped and congealed, and the next day, with a layer of crusted wax underneath, it relit itself and wept."

Iran's children are all magically damaged, and Rabinyan translates their emotional lives into symbols, often symbols that live. Maurice, her only son, to whom she is obsessively connected, was born with his heart "hiding on the right side of his chest" (she treats this by eating chicken hearts herself for three years). Her daughter Lizzie has an intense craving for figs, a sign of her "passionate temperament"; so "Mama sewed strings of bells onto the hems of her skirts, to weigh them down and prevent the wind from raising them." It is this precious language that turns a story of a depressed woman overburdened by familial concerns into a treasure.

Still, for all its many virtues, ***Strand of a Thousand Pearls*** does not sparkle like its predecessor. There are too many characters, too much pedestrian history packed in: As I read, I kept imagining Rabinyan was hewing too closely to a narrated family biography, including mundane details that would be meaningful to history but not to literature, particularly not to a literature as symbolic as this. It's a shame, because such earthly concerns dim the real pleasure that there is in Rabinyan's book, as she draws out the costs of a burdened life and leads her characters to a kind of refreshing, if compromised, peace.

It's easy to criticize ***Writing the Book of Ester*** (Quality Words in Print, $21.95) as a work in progress. Its literary devices are sometimes confusing, its language at times overwrought, and its message of universal love triumphing over hate simplistic. Yet for all those distractions, **Louise Domaratius's** book makes for a remarkably engaging read.

The story follows Celia Davis, an American woman teaching English in France. An outsider herself, she finds herself drawn to one of her high school students, another outsider named Mehdi. He and his sister have fled political repression in post-revolution Iran. Their father, a Muslim, is dead, and their mother, Ester, who is Jewish, is a writer and a dissident still in Iran under constant threat of persecution. As Celia's relationship with Mehdi develops into a romance, she finds herself drawn into the drama of Mehdi's younger sister, who has responded to her own experience of repression by dying her hair blond and taking up with a neo-Nazi boyfriend who entices her into acts of anti-Semitic vandalism. She also finds herself writing a "book" about his mother that parallels the Jewish book of Esther, filling in the details of her stand against a brutal autocracy.

"Life is a story that God, or time, or what you will, writes over and over again. It's just the names of the players that change," Celia tells her young lover about her book of "Ester." It's just this kind of sappy sensitivity that mars this text. But Domaratius's characters are well-rounded, and the humanity and pathos she gives them leaves the reader eager to follow their story. My recommendation? Someone should get past the writing and take this saga to Hollywood.

—SARAH BLUSTAIN

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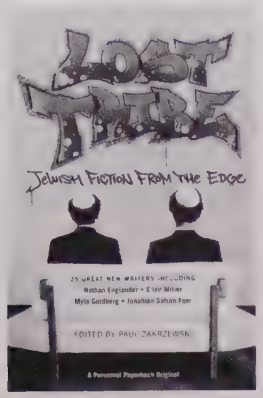

In this bold new compilation, **Lost Tribe: Jewish Fiction From the Edge** (Perennial, $14.95), editor **Paul Zakrzewski** scopes out fresh and fertile terrain. And of the 25 stories or novel excerpts found here, more than half are written by women. Some are well known, like Myla Goldberg and Tova Mirvis, and several, including Goldberg, Rachel Kadish and Dara Horn, have previously appeared in the pages of LILITH.

What's most arresting in this anthology is the expansive range: of tone, voice, subject matter. In Ellen Umansky's "How to Make It to the Promised Land," we meet Lizzie, a teenage girl who feels woefully out of place at her Zionist summer camp in Malibu, especially when the age-old tradition of color war is subverted into an unsettling game about Jews trying to escape deportation to concentration camps in 1940s Europe. As the story unfolds, the "game" begins to feel all too real: "I am not Lizzie Lenthem, 15, of Topanga, California but Anya Ossevsheva, 21, of Lodz. I have four kids. I have a long aquiline nose and a hard unsmiling mouth. I look nothing like me." Gloria DeVidas Kirchenheimer's "Goodbye Evil Eye" acquaints us with Louise, a young woman who falls in love with her first cousin as the two of them search for the grave of their grandfather, a Sephardic Jew, buried in The Cedars of Lebanon. It's a place that "straddled the no-man's-land between Queens and Brooklyn, with the Expressway dividing the waves of headstones." "Seekers in the Holy Land" by Joan Leegant brings us to present-day Safed, home of ancient Kabbalist mysteries, while Simone Zeitlich's "Ten Plagues" goes back to the time of Moses and Aaron. Together, these stories offer a kaleidoscopic and sometimes apocalyptic view of what it means to be living, thinking and writing as a Jew today.

—YONA ZELDIS MCDONOUGH

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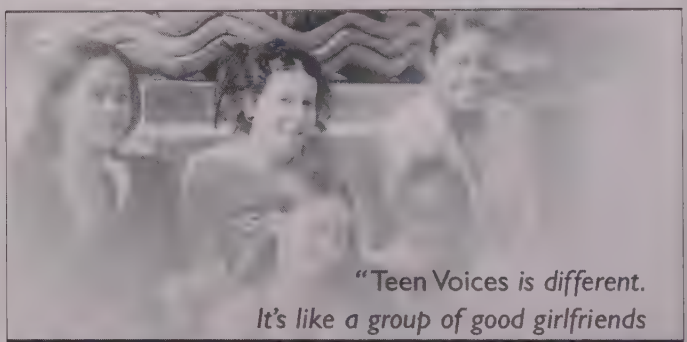
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JOAN LEEGANT: STRANGE PAIRINGS

A rabbi whose encounter with a pair of Siamese twins rocks his world and his faith. A father whose life of hard work and devotion is utterly undone by his charming, perfidious son. Three sisters—one Hindu, one Orthodox Jew and one an actress of no particular persuasion (but trying to keep her head above water)—all receive a chance at happiness through the intervention of a loving, unseen hand. These are just some scenarios that play out with humor, grace and a sense of divine mystery hovering just beyond their horizons in **Joan Leegant's** much-heralded debut collection of stories, ***An Hour in Paradise*** (W.W. Norton, $23.95).

Leegant, once a lawyer, is an expert at unexpected pairings. Her mismatched characters—a smug Russian emigre and the suburban neighbor he manages to torment, an arrogant young American and the Germanic, blonde tourist he meets on his search for kabbalist mysteries in Safed, the former drug-dealer-turned-yeshiva-boy and the dying AIDS patient he is trying to comfort—all have a way of turning their particular light on one another. The result is a more crisply delineated view of each. And Leegant's engaging blend of skepticism and faith, sharp-eyed observation and magical intervention makes this group of 10 stories shimmer with a wholly original brand of reverence and belief.

Yet Leegant did not grow up immersed in the tenets and trappings of her faith. Her parents were second-generation Americans who, like many of their era, wanted to get away from what they perceived as a narrow parochialism.

As a teenager, she had an attraction to things Jewish, and began going to Friday night services alone, even joining the synagogue choir, which was otherwise comprised of adults. When she went off to college, however, she was not interested in Judaism. "It seemed too prescriptive and confining, in the heady late 60s, early 70s of my college years," she said in a recent phone interview from her home in Newton, Massachusetts. But in her late twenties, in a turn worthy of one of her own short stories, Leegant went to Israel, studied at Pardes, a progressive yeshiva, and for several years became quite observant, living on the fringes of a ba'al tshuva community.

Striking in this collection is the number of men who drive the stories. "Actually, for a long time I was more at home writing male protagonists than female ones," she notes. "I think I had more distance on men and was therefore more able to write about them, more confident that I could write the stories artfully. I have also shied away from autobiographical writing, so I think that's another reason I've liked writing about male characters: because they can't possibly be me."

But Leegant moves with ease from one fictional voice to another. Boaz, a kibbutznik, remembers his wife, now dead, in "The Seventh Year." "He closed his eyes and saw her then: a borrowed yellow dress, her dark hair unbraided, and red lips; she must have found a lipstick. Then afterward, juice and cookies, a pilfered bottle of Scotch, some singing and dancing in the parched field behind the chicken houses." Somehow, the picture of the bride is as vivid as the mournful man who remembers her.

Leegant's path to writing was, as she describes it, almost accidental. "One day I had gotten a babysitter for my sons, then about 5 and 3, so I could go to the local JCC to swim. But when I got there, the pool was closed. What to do? Two hours of precious babysitting time, and I'm not much of a shopper, so I looked to see what else was happening at the JCC at that hour, and lo and behold, it was a writing group. I stayed with that wonderful group for a year and eventually began writing fiction."

Lucky for us.

—Y.Z.M.

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Civil Liberties vs. Knee-Jerk Patriotism

Jennifer Natalya Fink's provocative and ambitious novel, ***Burn*** (Suspect Thoughts Press: San Francisco, $16.95), could not have been released at a better time. As politicians grapple with ways to curtail civil liberties and concoct ways to monitor activities deemed suspicious, a book that revisits the McCarthy era seems prescient.

Set in the fictitious Sylvan Lake Collective Colony, a small upstate New York settlement of Jewish former Brooklynites active in the Communist Party, *Burn* focuses on the Party's decline. Meetings are rendered in rich, evocative prose. Indeed, readers will vicariously experience the incessant bickering of Colony members as they try to decide how best to deal with FBI probes, overt and covert surveillance, and the ongoing desire to foment revolution.

At the center of the tale is Sylvia Edelman, a savvy, menopausal widow and passionate gardener. Sylvia tends her tomatoes and zucchini tenaciously, eagerly groveling in the mud and grime. Although many Colonists are leaving the community for safer suburbs, Sylvia intends to stay put, growing her vegetables and living simply. This plan goes awry, however, when out of nowhere, a young boy—naked except for dogtags indicating that his name is Simon—shows up on her plot of land. Is he a government agent? A runaway teen? Or simply a kid who has lost his way?

In short order, Sylvia and Simon become lovers. While there is no question that this is pedophilia, the literary mix of sex and politics works. Simon, a male Lolita, arouses Sylvia to heretofore unimagined lust; because he is mute, the comfort he offers is enveloping and complete.

Throughout the novel, McCarthy's efforts to eviscerate "the enemy within" are juxtaposed with Sylvia's attempts to distract herself from worldly concerns. But *Burn* is about more than one woman's escape from the machinations of tyrannical leaders. In fact, the novel addresses the impact of government surveillance on both leftists and the apolitical, and interrogates the meaning of personal loyalty, sexual propriety, and civic commitment. The result is wise, timely, and often amusing.

Despite the humor, *Burn* offers a serious message: When human rights and civil liberties are sacrificed to knee-jerk patriotism, everyone suffers. Read it and be reminded.

—ELEANOR J. BADER

Listening with the Inner Ear

Disturbance of the Inner Ear (Carroll and Graf, $25) is a novel that trades many conventions of storytelling to mix incident, emotion, history, and social observation. To the extent that **Joyce Hackett's** debut novel is pure narrative, it's about an orphaned former child prodigy, a brilliant young cellist named Isabel Masurovsky who finds herself alone in Italy without the means to support herself. It's about her past: her father, once a renowned pianist, was an inmate at Theresienstadt and raised his daughter to maintain a focus that would enable her to withstand any obstacle. It's also about her present life, as she tries to live independently for the first time. And *Disturbance of the Inner Ear* is about the people Isabel meets and how they affect her: Giulio, a surgeon trying to outrun his life and Clayton, her student, who tries to hum over the friction in his.

This novel asks its readers to work unusually hard to confirm setting, determine who's speaking, establish a relationship between characters, and understand what happened when. The effort can be frustrating, especially at the beginning of the novel, whose cold tone does not readily invite engagement. Yet the novel creates wholeness as it goes along, and its main ingredients—especially shrewdness and lyricism—accumulate into a new taste, a delicacy that turns out to be sublime. What readers might lose in comfort and even in intimacy with the novel's main character, they gain in insight—"Europeans don't lose ourselves in grandiose wanting the way Americans do. Our empires are over. Everything matters slightly less…"—and in beauty: "There is hardly any place more soothing than a luthier's. A balm of perfect humidity balances the mind and dampens sorrow."

—PATRICIA GROSSMAN

Circumcision— That Most Manly Mitzvah

At first glance, a collection of essays on circumcision as part of the Brandeis Series on Jewish Women might prompt a double-take. What could be more patently out of place?" So begins the introduction to this intriguing collection of essays, ***The Covenant of Circumcision: New Perspectives on an Ancient Jewish Rite*** (Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, $26.00). Like the editor,

Our Reviewers

ELEANOR J. BADER is co-author of *Targets of Hatred: Anti-Abortion Terrorism* and a contributor to In These Times, Library Journal, The New York Law Journal and The Progressive.

SARAH BLUSTAIN is associate editor for The American Prospect Magazine and a LILITH contributing editor.

MIRIAM FELTON-DANSKY, director of the Jewish Student Press Service, is acting artistic director of Polybe + Seats, a new theater company.

PATRICIA GROSSMAN is the author of three novels. She lives in Brooklyn.

ANGELA HIMSEL's writing has appeared in Tikkun, Jewish Week and The Forward. She recently completed a novel based on her own conversion from Christianity to Judaism.

ZINAIDA MILLER's undergraduate thesis was "An Arranged Marriage? A Proposal for a Truth Commission in Israel/ Palestine." She is a student at Harvard Law School, focusing on international human rights.

SUSAN SAPIRO holds an M.A. in Gender Studies. She researches gender issues in contemporary Judaism.

DEBORAH OSMOND lives in Montreal. Her articles have appeared in academic publications on Jewish and British history and in The Globe and Mail.

VICKI POLIN is the founder and director of The Awareness Center: the Jewish Coalition Against Sexual Abuse/Assault. She is also an art therapist.

RACHEL JOSEFOWITZ SIEGEL, a writer and semi-retired feminist therapist, was able to find refuge in Switzerland, then in the U.S., at the beginning of the Nazi regime. She has co-edited three books on Jewish women.

Elizabeth Wyner Mark, I too wondered this when I first picked up this book. However, women and questions of gender are very present in this volume, which includes a focus on biblical texts and rabbinic and kabbalistic commentaries on the ritual, essays presenting brit milah in its different cultural and historical contexts in Jewish history, and an exploration of how contemporary Jews in Israel, Europe, and America respond to the mitzvah of milah. The epilogue, "A Medley of Women's Voices," records part of a kitchen-table conversation among women (Conservative and Reform rabbis, an Orthodox physician, a secular scholar) who reflect on their feelings about this most manly of *mitzvot*. —S.S.

The Unique Experiences of Women in the Holocaust

Nazi attempts to annihilate all Jews involved specific measures against men and against women, and triggered different gender responses. The authors and editors of these two volumes acknowledge that many survivors and Holocaust scholars have serious objections to including gender factors in their research, for fear of trivializing the enormity of the Holocaust. These authors disagree; for them, the focus on gender differences adds specificity and depth to our understanding of what happened to ordinary people during the Holocaust.

In ***Resilience and Courage: Women, Men, and the Holocaust*** (Yale University Press, $35), recently honored with a National Jewish Book Award, **Nehama Tec**, a multilingual survivor and author of four previous books on the Holocaust, conveys the particulars of daily living as they were experienced and remembered by survivors. Tec is careful to recognize the possible distortions in memories of trauma and to guard against the biases and assumptions of both interviewer and interviewee. She draws the reader into the lives of men and women who lived through these horrors and were able to speak of them. They report that Jewish men were likely to respond to their early public humiliations with major depression and resulting apathy, while their wives took over in fighting for the family's survival. In the ghettoes, mothers were remembered as frequently giving bigger portions of their meager food to fathers and children while depriving themselves. Outside the ghetto, women could 'pass' more easily, risking their lives to carry ammunition and messages. In concentration camps and labor camps, all Jews suffered starvation, arbitrary cruelties, and dehumanizing workloads. In addition women were exposed to rapes, forced abortions, and the wrenching killings of their children. Resistance took many forms for both women and men from small individual acts of punishable kindness or self-preservation to organized efforts. Previous books noted the strong nurturing bonds among women in the camps. Tec finds that men's bonding experiences differed but could have been just as life affirming or even life saving, yet men were less likely to assign importance to them when they recounted their experiences.

In ***Experience and Expression: Women, the Nazis, and the Holocaust,*** (Wayne State University Press, $24.95),

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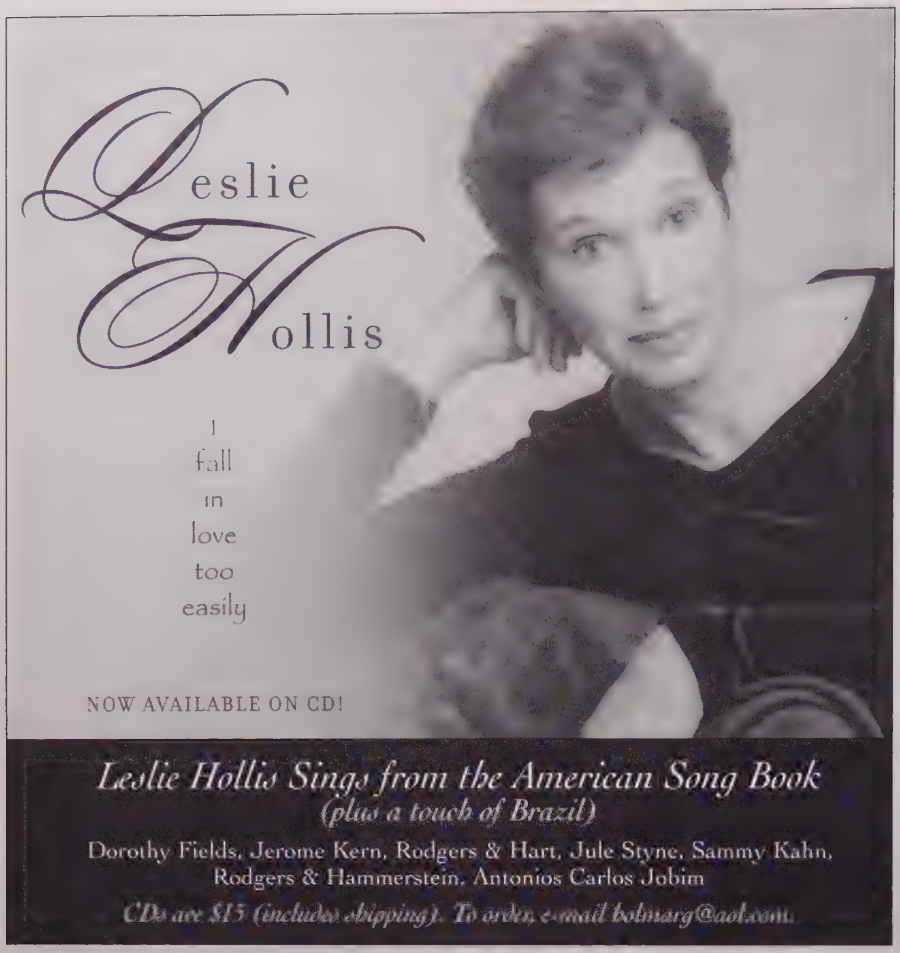
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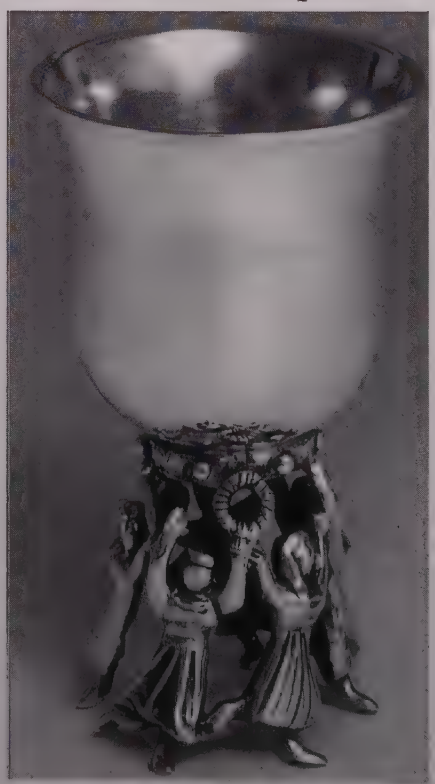

Elizabeth R. Baer and **Myrna Goldenberg** have collected 13 essays about women, Jewish and non-Jewish, victims and perpetrators. These pieces include facts and figures that can be even more devastating than the qualitative reports of survivors. Here, the focus is on Nazi efforts to prevent non-Aryan women, including Jewish women, from having children. We read about Russian and Polish forced female farm laborers in Germany, their involuntary abortions, the systematic starving and poisoning of babies and young children, and the knowing participation of German farmers and villagers. Two chapters report on the German nurses whose moral and religious struggles rarely stopped them from performing what they considered acts of compassion in making the doomed children's deaths less painful. Other chapters deal with the importance of memoirs, the specifically female contributions of resisters, including the selective use of flirtatiousness or helpless appearance when necessary. What sets this book apart are the sophisticated discussions of feminist theories, their applications to the Shoah and to its depictions in literature and the arts.

It is impossible to do justice to these two books in so brief a review. Their combined impact will deeply change readers' understanding of the Holocaust.

—RACHEL JOSEFOWITZ SIEGEL

Two Novels About Israel, by Women

The Al Aksa intifada now entering its fourth year and by now part of Israel's collective consciousness, forms the basis for **Orly Castel-Bloom's** new novel ***Human Parts*** (translated from the Hebrew by Dalya Bilu; David Godine, $24.95). The setting is Israel's freakishly cold and snowy winter of 2001, when terrorist attacks were occurring with alarming frequency, causing the economy to sink. Castel-Bloom, a writer who is known in Israel for her dark views on life there, takes the reader through the lives of a handful of individuals from every level of society. We meet Kati Beit-Halahmi, an impoverished cleaning lady with four children and an unemployed

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husband, who, unable to afford to heat her apartment, is thrilled to be interviewed about her plight on a television news program; Iris Ventura, a divorced mother of three who, once living a comfortable life with her architect now-ex-husband, cannot pay her bills; the depressed young man Adir, who, fed up with the constant violence, yearns to leave Israel with his Ethiopian girlfriend Tasaro. The president of Israel, Reuven Tekoa, *i.e.,* Ehud Barak, runs around Israel comforting bereaved families, who are dying not only at the hands of terrorists but also from a virulent form of influenza that has accompanied that winter's terrible weather. He too succumbs to the apocalypse, so exhausting himself that he ends up in the hospital. Everybody, from the most vulnerable to the powerful, is being literally or figuratively—hence the book's title—blown to bits by what the Israelis euphemistically call *Hamatsav,* "the situation."

Castel-Bloom narrates her tale in a flat voice, keeping us at a distance, as if that is the only way she can bear to tell us this awful story. In contrast, **Edeet Ravel,** places her debut novel ***Ten Thousand Lovers*** (HarperCollins paperback, $12.95) in the 1970s, and lets her emotions show, along with her politics. Ravel's book is about Lily, a young Israeli-born, Canadian-bred (like the author) student, who on the first page falls in love with Ami, an army interrogator, who counts a Palestinian among his best friends. As Ami reveals, little by little, what he does in his job, which pays him a handsome living, both Lily and her lover become unnerved. In the end, the couple cannot live with the reality of Ami's actions. The ending is far from happy. Yet Ravel/Lily, who, in contrast to Castel-Bloom, lets the reader inside her heart, seems to believe that ultimately, good things will happen. ■

—ALICE SPARBERG ALEXIOU

The Trouble with Islam

Continued from page 33

Bored with an argument-on-autopilot, I proposed a different line: that we Muslims don't give people much incentive to see us as anything but monolithic. Where, I asked, were Muslims in Toronto, Vancouver, or Montreal when the Taliban toppled the pre-Islamic statues of Buddha that overlooked Afghanistan's Bamiyan Valley? "Let there be no compulsion in religion," says the Koran. We couldn't expect the Taliban to sing that tune, but why didn't Muslims in the West choose to sing it rather than remain mostly mute? Why the absence of mass Muslim protests in our own streets?

I waited.

The sole response came from another Muslim woman—an active feminist, no less. "Manji," she blurted, "do you know what's happening to Muslims in Palestine?" Excuse me?! Somebody return me to earth, or transport my butt to a part of the solar system where we distinguish between justice and justification. I'll give her this much: There's obviously some relationship between the rise of Islamic totalitarianism and the intractable politics of the Middle East. But how did that textured relationship justify Muslim silence in the West toward the scripturally supremacist, Buddha-bombing, woman-pulverizing, kite-banning, execution-enamored Taliban? ■

From The Trouble With Islam: A Muslim's Call for Reform in Her Faith *by Irshad Manji copyright © 2003 by the author. Reprinted by arrangement with St. Martin's Press and available wherever books are sold.*

"I will greatly bless you and make your descendants numerous as the stars in the heavens..."

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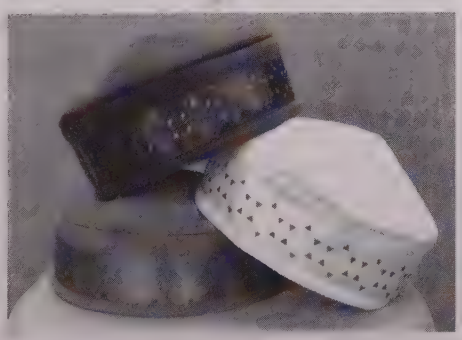

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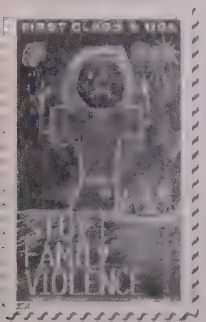
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Journey Toward Freedom: A Haggada for Women Who Have Experienced Domestic Violence is designed to transform the seder into a service that addresses the oppression—and liberation—of women journeying from abuse to safety. Available from The FaithTrust Institute: Working Together to End Sexual & Domestic Violence (formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence) *(877)860-2255. www.faithtrustinstitute.org*

"**Stop Family Violence**" is a new 45-cent first-class U.S. postage stamp. Funds raised —less the Postal Service's costs—go to the Department of Health & Human Services in accordance with the Stamp Out Domestic Violence Act of 2001. Available at post offices; at *(800)STAMP-24. www.usps.com/shop*



THE PERSONAL AND THE POLITICAL

Equality in Marriage. Not a moment too soon! Here's an organization promoting marriage as an emotional, legal and financial partnership of equals, and providing information, resources and support to women and men before, during and after marriage. *www.equalityinmarriage org*

Casting Your Vote on Women's Issues. Better act now. Register to vote, update your name and/or address on the voter rolls, or change your party affiliation, and encourage others to register too. *www.fec.gov*

"**Reconciliation News**" is a free bi-weekly electronic newsletter created by Laura Davis (author of *Courage to Heal*). It explores ways to resolve relationships that have ended because of anger, betrayal and misunderstanding. There's an online discussion board so you can join in a virtual dialogue. *www LauraDavis.net*

Coexistence is a giant outdoor poster exhibit composed of visual images created by artists from around the world. Initiated and produced in Israel, by the Museum on the Seam for Dialogue, Understanding and Coexistence—which explores the boundaries "between war and peace, between distress and well-being, between religious faith and secularism, between reality and hope, between you and me." This is the first outdoor exhibit hosted by the St. Petersburg's Florida Holocaust Museum, and can be viewed through April at different times in St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Boca Raton, Tallahassee. *(727)820-0100 www.mots.org.il www.flholocaustmuseum.org*

See announcement for LILITH's POETRY CONTEST on page 3.

PLAN AHEAD

KosherRoomMates.com matches people looking for a kosher place to live with people who want to share their kosher apartment or home.

A LARGE PRINT PASSOVER HAGADA in Hebrew only, or in Hebrew and English, as well as a large print book of Sabbath Songs, *shabbat zmirot* in Hebrew only, are free on request from the Jewish Heritage for the Blind, *jhb.ny@verizon.net; (877)230-2205.*

Voyage on the Volga. Join Debbie Friedman and 220 Jewish women from around the world as they travel by ship to communities in Russia where Project Kesher's activists are rebuilding Jewish life and advancing women's rights, June 20-28, 2004. *(847)332-1994. www.projectkesher.org*

ACTIVE REMEMBRANCE

Klezmer on Fish Street, a documentary film, follows a group of young musicians from the Boston area who traveled to Poland to perform, in a phenomenon they describe as "cultural philo-Semitism." Particularly in Poland, there are many Jewish cultural offerings for tourists, but hardly any resident Jews. Alta Frohman, the singer Shira Shazeer's grandmother, accompanied the band and interpreted. She had not been back to Poland since she was deported to Siberia 57 years earlier. (Before the war, there were 23,000 Jews living in Bedzin, Frohman's childhood home, and today there are none.) Produced by Elizabeth

Alta Frohman leads the Klezmaniacs to her girlhood home on Fish Street In Bedzin, Poland

Schwartz and directed by Yale Strom. Opens at the Quad Cinema in New York on Feb. 20th. Available through *Castle Hill Films, (212)242-1500.*

The Phoenix Effect is a feature-length documentary about second-generation Holocaust survivors who grew up in Vineland, NJ after the war. The film, made by Sharyn C. Blumenthal and Edith Hirstal, concludes with the third generation examining how the transference of trauma affects them too. Rental information from: *Kim Price, Kprice@laopera.com or (213)972-0743.*

Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Authority in Jerusalem, is marking it's 50th year. Projects including: the uploading of the database of names of Holocaust victims to the Internet; an evening of recognition for Holocaust survivors and their families; a conference dealing with Holocaust education, and the establishment of the "Eternal Fund for Preserving and Perpetuating the Memory of the Holocaust." *www.yadvashem.org.il/*

Stolen Art. The American Association of Museums has launched the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal, a registry of objects in U.S. museums that could have changed hands in Europe during the Nazi era, 1933-1945. The website was created to assist heirs of Holocaust victims in finding and claiming artwork stolen from their families by the Nazis. You can read about art restitution efforts on the website of the Claims Conference, *www.claimscon.org*, under "compensation and restitution"; see also *www.nepip.org.*

ASSORTED GOOD DEEDS

The Mitzvah of Recycling. Inspired by our listing of the organization Locks of Love, LILITH reader Nicole Perlman wrote that she sends a year-end letter to friends listing ways they can help others with things they might be discarding. Send:

- glasses, loose lenses and sunglasses to *New Eyes for the Needy, P.O. Box 332, 549 Millburn Ave., Shorthills, NJ 07078*;
- gift wrap, greeting cards or party favors to *Love Letters Inc., P.O. Box 416875, Chicago IL 60641*, who send cards and toys to terminally ill children;
- prom clothing to *Fairy Godmothers,c/o Cobra wire and Cable, Attn: Joyce Jesko, 2930 Turnpike Drive, Hatboro, PA 19040;*
- luggage, backpacks and suit bags to *Foster Care Luggage, 1746 Kenneth Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46260;*
- unwanted items at the end of the college year to *www.dumpandrun.org (508)579-7188.*

Let Nicole know if you hear of a good idea to add to her list: *Npearl913@aol.com.*

Israeli film & stage star Gila Almagor brings movie stars, sport heroes, TV personalities, singers and political leaders to visit children in hospitals. The Wishes Foundation has taken groups of sick Israeli children—Jewish, Muslim and Christian—on trips to Spain, a safari in Kenya, to Euro Disney and Disneyland, and provides books, games, computers. Almagor is author of the classic Israeli autobiographical novels *The Summer of Aviyah* and *Under the Domim Tree*—both made into films. She has become so involved with sick children, she told LILITH recently, that her newest young adult book, in Hebrew, is about three 12-year-old friends, one with cancer. *Gila Almagor's Wishes Foundation, Chicago office, (847)421-4121, or Tel Aviv office (972)-3-522-4640.*

OUR BODIES

March to Save Women's Lives: March for Freedom of Choice. Sunday, April 25th, 2004 in Washington, DC. Send us your e-mail address for details with the subject message **under a LILITH banner** to *lilithmag@aol.com;* also see *www.feminist.org.*

Heart disease is the number one killer of women in the United States and claims 10 times as many lives as breast cancer. Despite this staggering statistic, many women think of it as a man's disease, and die needlessly, because heart disease is preventable and treatable. Woman's Heart Day is the third Friday in February, this year February 21. *www.sistertosister.org*

OLDER VOICES

Beautiful Hills of Brooklyn is a one-woman, one-act play by Ellen Cassedy, short story writer and translator of fiction from Yiddish. Based on a diary her aunt kept in 1970s, the piece evokes the daily life of an elderly Brooklyn woman, and includes the flowing verses of Walt Whitman. It recently debuted in New York and is available to travel. *Ellen Cassedy cassblum@aol.com; (301)565-0006.*

Voices of Thinking Jewish Women, compiled by Prudence Wright Holmes with an introduction by Doris B. Gold, is a collection of 44 brief pieces and thumbnail biographies, from "Mrs. Abzug Goes to Washington" by Bella Abzug to "No Going Back to the Old World" by Anzia Yezierska. A resource to consult if you're looking for a telling anecdote or quote for a speech or article. $9.95 from *Biblio Press, (212)989-2755.*

FRESH FICTION FOR LILITH

Wanted: vibrant, compelling and original stories with heart, soul and chutzpah for LILITH's 3rd annual short story contest. The winning entry will be published in LILITH; the author will receive a $250 honorarium. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, 2500 words or less, previously unpublished. Please include your name and contact information on a separate cover sheet. No manuscripts will be returned. Deadline Feb. 1, 2004. *LILITH Magazine, 250 West 57th Street, #2432, New York, NY 10107-0172, (888)2-LILITH. Lilithmag@aol.com www.lilithmag.com*

LILITH charts Jewish women's lives with exuberance, rigor, clairvoyance, subversion and style. The magazine is completely independent; no organization covers the expenses of sustaining this bold publication. Please consider making a tax-deductible contribution by check or credit card. Thank you. LILITH, 250 W. 57th St., #2432, New York, NY 10107; (888) 2-LILITH; or fax (212) 757-5705.

Island on a Hill is the debut CD of songs conceived, composed and performed by singers and songwriters of the Jewish Home in San Francisco, in collaboration with songwriter-in-residence Judith-Kate Friedman. The truthfulness, sensory memories, spunk, humor, wistfulness, perspective and sheer talent of the seniors—and Friedman, who catalyzed them—are amazing. *www.songwritingworks.org CD available at www.jewishmusic.com.*

—compiled by Naomi Danis

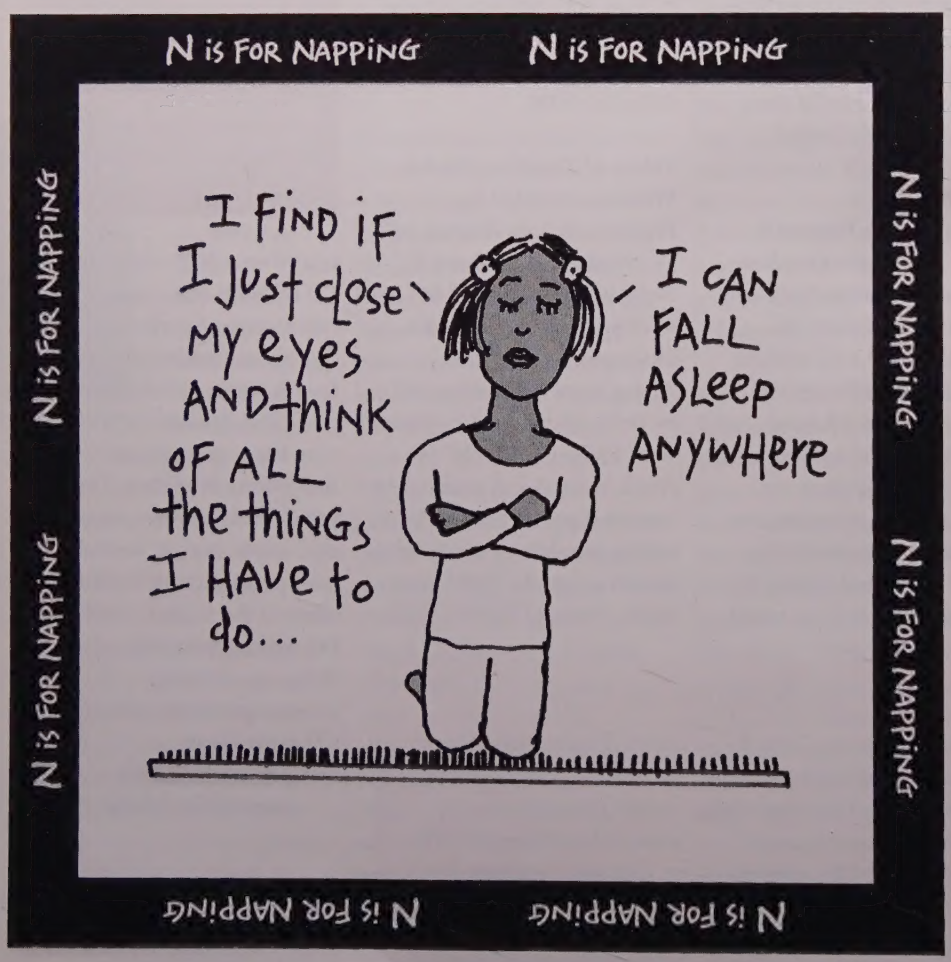
Correction

Contact "Princess Moxie Rules!" [Fall 03] *(510)763-0022; Jlevine_task@hotmail.com; www.princessmoxie.org*

the ABC of Vice

BY NICOLE HOLLANDER & REGINA BARRECA

One of our favorite artists and cartoonists, the hilarious Nicole Hollander, who has given us two great LILITH covers over the years, has a new book. Her many fans will rejoice (and laugh out loud) over *The ABCs*..... This is a preview, reprinted with permission.


N is for napping
N is for napping
I find if I just close my eyes and think of all the things I have to do...
I can fall asleep anywhere
N is for napping
N is for napping
N is for napping
N is for napping
N is for napping
N is for napping

Napping is nature's way of getting you into tip-top shape. Haven't lots of big executives and great thinkers extolled naps as the key to their enormous success? Wasn't there just a magazine article about this? Look for the magazine. **Decide it is time to go through the stacks of magazines you've accumulated over the past weeks.** Months. Pause to look at the other articles that might also help you get to your goal quicker. (NOT THE IMMEDIATE GOAL OF NAPPING, BUT THE LARGER GOAL FOR WHICH NAPPING WILL PREPARE YOU.) Hunt for scissors with which to cut out some of the more useful articles. Decide it would be good to start a file where you know you could find these articles. Look through your old filing cabinet for a file you aren't actively using so you can start this new important file. Decide it is time to organize your filing cabinet. **Eventually fall asleep on the floor, covered by clippings.**

From the *ABC of Vice, An Insatiable Women's Guide, Alphabetized*, Bibliopola Press, UConn Co-op, $10.95.

To a battered woman, every month is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

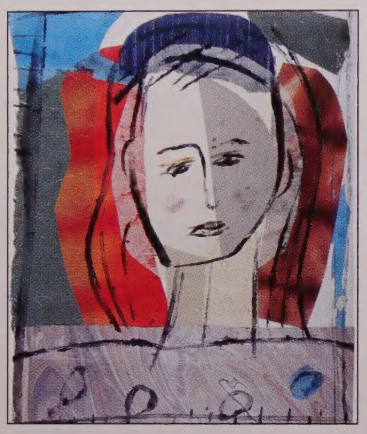
In October and every month, Jewish Women International speaks out against domestic abuse in the Jewish community—
through action, advocacy and awareness programs that empower women and girls.

Now, in honor of DV Awareness Month and the Jewish new year, we're calling for a renewed community promise to make home a safe place for every Jewish woman and child.

Jewish Women INTERNATIONAL

JOIN JWI's CALL TO ACTION

You can help end violence against women. Visit www.jewishwomen.org or call 1.800.343.2823 to learn how.



Lilith notecards

Enjoy our beautiful covers again with these new notecards, featuring some of our extraordinary artists: Miriam Schapiro, Joni Levy Liberman, Lynne Feldman and Betty La Duke. Order sets for yourself and as gifts, and support LILITH at the same time. Twelve full-color blank notecards: Only $15.

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